# LITERARY RELIQUES

OF

# JOSEPH STRUTT.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by James Ballantyne & Co.

# QUEENHOO-HALL,

## A Romance:

AND

# ANCIENT TIMES,

## A DRAMA.

BY THE LATE

JOSEPH STRUTT,

AUTHOR OF "RURAL SPORTS AND PASTIMES OF THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND," &c.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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# QUEENHOO-HALL;

BEING

## *A HISTORY OF TIMES PAST.*

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### SECTION VII.—CONTINUED.

### CHAPTER II.

*A Chapter that hath no concern with the History, and, for aught I know, may be as well passed over as read.*

When the company seated themselves in the hall, they were entertained with the splendid hospitality which became the owner of a large feudal domain. It is true, that the fastidious eye of modern taste might have considered the feast as more plentiful than elegant, and that even the centre dish, which was a wild boar roasted entire, would have demolished by

its weight any modern set of tables, though clasped with brass hold-fasts, and supported by three-clawed pillars. It is also true, that the circumstance of the boar's head being decorated with fire-works, which exploded of a sudden, would have spread dismay, rather than pleasure, through a modern party of *bons vivants.* It is, moreover, certain, that an host of retainers, whose hands were more frequently exercised in military exercise than in the service of the table, might have ill supplied the place of six well drilled lacqueys, a butler, valet, groom of the chamber, page, and chasseur, whom modern taste has substituted in the place of the blue-coated serving-men of former times. Yet, if good cheer, much heartiness, and loud laughter, could make amends for the absence of such refinements, it was found at the lordly board of Fitzallen, whose guests would have perhaps as little understood the small talk of a modern select party of *elegantes*, as the beef-fed

frequenters of his buttery would have relished the board-wages of a modern servants-hall.

When the tables were removed, the story of the barber was resumed and discussed at length. Eleanor, especially, approved of the punishment which had befallen poor Ralph, declaring, that she did not think it at all more than he deserved; Matilda, however, deemed he had been too severely used, especially as it appeared, that the coquetry of Margery had been in part the occasion of Ralph's application to the sorceress. The major part of the company acquiesced with the latter, and Margery was accused of having something of the shrew in her composition.

"However," added Eleanor, with a smile, "the whole of it is so much like romance, that I admire the spirit and address of the little vixen."

"You are fond then of romances, my good lady, I presume?" said the curate of Marden, who officiated as Fitzallen's chaplain.

"Indeed I am," replied the lady; "and I was, this morning, reading one that lay in my lord's study, which much pleased me. It is entitled, "The Squire of low degree, who served as a Page in the Court of the King of Hungary." The princess, his majesty's only daughter, fell in love with this page, who, you may be sure, was young and handsome. The story informs us, that, supposing him to have been slain in attempting to visit her, she mourned for him incessantly for seven years. The king, to assuage her grief, promises her such a world of pretty things, that I could not help wishing, that some of them might be realized in my favour."

"Pray let us hear what he promised," said Matilda.

"I must repeat it then in plain prose," said Eleanor; "but the original, I assure you, is in poetry.

"To-morrow," says he, "my dear daughter, you shall hunt with me; you shall ride in a

chair covered with red velvet; your head-dress shall be made with cloths of fine gold, of damask white, sky colour, and deep blue, diapered with new lilies; the fringes shall be ended with bosses of gold; you shall have many enamelled chains of gold folding over each other; your mantle shall be made of the rich Tyrian purple, lined with ermine and white jennets of Spain, faced to the ground with bright velvet.

"What do you say to that, my dear cousin?" said she, addressing herself to Matilda.

"What shall I say," said Matilda, "but that she would be exquisitely fine."

"And now mark," continued Eleanor, "what follows:—

"You shall have music of every kind to exhilerate the heart, as well vocal as instrumental."—

"Excellent!" cried the baron. "Pray go on."

"He then promises her a leash of hare-hounds, bred to the hand, for her to play

with; and assures her, she shall be so advantageously placed in her bower, that the hart and the hind shall be driven within her reach, and that the sweet music of the bugle-horns shall proclaim the conquest. Being satisfied with hunting," says the king, "as you ride homewards, you shall amuse yourself with hawking by the river's side, with goshawk and falcon, and other birds of the Menagerie." "You have forgotten," said the baron, "the fine wines of various countries, and the wild fowl and baked venison that was to be provided for her refreshment." "In truth," replied the lady, "I did not think that worth the mentioning; but to go on." The day's sports being ended, when you come home," continues his Majesty, "your servants shall welcome you with pageants; and dames, and children of different sexes, shall form a chorus, sweet as the notes of the nightingale. You shall go to your chapel to hear the evening song, composed of tenor and treble voices,

where sixty ecclesiastics shall officiate, habited in copes of bright damask, embroidered with pearls. The altar cloth shall be made of rich taffeta, and the censors of gold enchased with azure. The choir shall consist of famous singers, and organists of great skill; to which shall be added, the harmonic voices of children, trained to the most sublime music. From the chapel, you shall be ushered to your supper; the tables being spread in rich tents of arras, embroidered with sapphires and diamonds; the tents shall be pitched beneath the green arbours, with officers in abundance at your command, to bring you every thing that can afford you pleasure.

"The nightingale, sitting upon a thorn, shall sing her sweet notes to entertain you night and morning. An hundred knights shall attend you, and play at bowls, in cool bowling allies, for your diversion; and when you choose, you shall walk in the green ar-

bours, decked with curious flowers, and see the fishes wanton in the pools, and all to cure you of this melancholy.

"Now, I think this exceedingly delightful," said Eleanor, "but this is not all. You are now to suppose the fair lady preparing to quit the garden, and being come to the draw-bridge, the one half of which, we are told, is made of stone, the other of wood, we are assured, she shall find a barge having twenty-four oars, with trumpets and clarions, to row her up and down the river; and adds the good king, if you wish to go upon the salt water to see your distant possessions, fourscore large ships, with high towers, shall be ready to accompany you, with many others of smaller burden, the swiftest that swim upon the sea; and when you reach the haven, you shall be met by galleys having eighty oars each, and the mariners shall merrily sing as they row them through the water; and if, my dear daughter," continues the

good king, "you should need any refreshment during your voyage, wine with most excellent spices in rich cups, with dates and dainties of various kinds, shall be brought to you in abundance. At your return home, forty torches brightly burning, shall await at the draw-bridge to light you to your chamber, where every thing shall be gay and mirthful. The hangings of your bed shall be blue and white, embellished with lilies; the curtains of camaca, handsomely folded and embroidered with popinjays, white and red, and the rings belonging to them of gold. The tester shall be ornamented with precious stones; the coverlet shall be made with furs of ermine, powdered with fine gold; the blankets of Persian; the sheets of cloth of Rains; and the head sheet shall be set with diamonds and rubies."

"Bless me!" cried Matilda.

"This is prodigiously fine, indeed," said the baron.

"I thought I should surprise you," cried Eleanor, "but I have not quite done yet. When you are laid in your soft bed, continues the king of Hungary, a cage of gold shall be hung up in your chamber, with a long taper therein, burning with cloves, frankincense, and other sweet smelling spices, and if, perchance, you cannot sleep so readily as you wish, the minstrels shall wake all night to amuse you with their melody; and here his Majesty concludes."

"Indeed," said Fitzallen, "I think his promises are sufficiently ample, but I beseech you, my dear lady, what answer does the princess make to such a profusion of kindness?"

"I will tell you," replied the baron, "it is to this purpose"—

"In truth, my dear father, you might as well have held your tongue, for none of these things please me."

This occasioned the company to laugh; and Fitzallen, addressing himself to Eleanor, declared that he thought the lady was very unreasonable indeed.

Eleanor was a little disconcerted at the turn the baron had given to the discourse, and told him that he had not faithfully prophesied the first part of the lady's answer, which is not wanting in respect to her father; the latter part is tantamount to the words of the poet, who adds, that, so saying, she returned to her chamber to mourn over the supposed body of her lover, saying:

" And dearest squire for love of thee,
" Fy on all worldly vanity."

She then deplores his loss, and bids farewell to all the pleasures and comforts of life, as they were enumerated by her father, and declares that she will retire from the world, take the veil, and become a nun, and promises her lover that he shall every day have

five masses sung for the good of his soul, and that she will offer three silver pence at each of them, in token of the Trinity. Here, closing her lamentation, the poet describes her falling into a swoon through excess of grief. Her father, unknown to her, had overheard her complaint, and finding how deeply she was affected by the supposition of the death of her lover, assured her "that he was still living; that from a squire of low degree, he was become a knight, and had performed many worthy deeds of chivalry; that he, the king, had bestowed upon him a noble barony, to make him more worthy of her fair hand."

This short speech had ten thousand times more weight than all his former promises. The lady expressed her gratitude in the most dutiful terms, recovered her health and spirits in a short time, reconciled herself again to the worldly vanities that she had rejected in her grief, and married her lover amidst

the rejoicings and acclamations of the people in general.

When the curate perceived that Eleanor had concluded her narrative, he thus addressed her:—" Without doubt, my dear lady, you are well assured that the story you have related is founded upon falsehood, not only with respect to the supposed facts recorded in it, but also respecting the operation that such facts would have had upon the human mind, supposing them to have been literally true. Does it stand within the reach of probability, may I say, of possibility, that a delicate young lady should have taken the body of her lover, embalmed it with her own hands, hung over it, and embraced it every day, until it was consumed to dust? for so I think the story runs. Seven years incessant grief, unalleviated by any comfort, and completely alienated from hope, are circumstances that set even probability at defiance, and especially when we add to it, the anxiety, lest her

father should discover the true cause of her sorrow, and deprive her of the melancholy satisfaction derived from the mouldering carcase of the object of her affections. Look then to the list of promises which are far beyond what can be realized, and merely calculated to lead the mind into the pursuit of such pleasures, as cannot be procured.

"The moral also, of this tale, is absolutely faulty; for after the heroine had devoted herself to a life of religious recluseness, she reassumes her former splendour, embraces afresh the vanities she had professed to renounce, and launches without restraint into the turbulent ocean of public life.

"These, and the like, or indeed still greater absurdities, are continually obvious in writings of this species; but the imagination is so easily attached to what is marvellous, that the loss of truth is not discerned, or at least, it does not become, as it ought to be, a subject of investigation; while on the other

hand, the miraculous part of the story takes a stronger possession of the mind than we are easily aware of."

"I much agree with you, Sir John, upon this subject," said Fitzallen; "and in the retrospect, these compositions are altogether puerile, or at least, the effusions of fancy, unrestrained by judgment; and yet, I cannot help acknowledging, that I have read many of them with great satisfaction; and even now, a passage occurs to my mind, which may be found in the celebrated poem, entitled, 'The Death of Arthur.' The poet assures us, that the sword called, if I mistake not, Caliburn, with which the hero achieved a variety of wonderful exploits, was by his command, at the time he lay in the agonies of death, cast into a large lake. The circumstances of throwing away the sword are largely particularized, and especially, that an armed hand, thrust from the lake, received it before it reached the water, and waved it

three times in the air, and three times responsive thunders rolled through the atmosphere. The hand and the sword then descended into the water, occasioning such a commotion in the lake, that the waves overflowed their banks. I never read this passage, without conceiving that there was something exceedingly majestic in the idea, and that I stood, as it were, a silent witness of the tremendous scene."

"I do not doubt it," said Fitzallen. "I remember also a circumstance in one of our popular romances, entitled, if I mistake not, *Sir Bevy's of Southampton*, that made a very strong impression upon my mind when I was a boy; nay, in fact, it is not obliterated even now.

"A champion is introduced, who had lost his wife in the midst of a large forest, while he had been searching for water to preserve her life. In traversing the thickets to and fro, he came at last to the cell of a holy her-

mit, and to him he related his misfortune. The good man having heard his complaint, shook his head, and wiping the tears from his eyes, heaved a heavy sigh, and told the knight, "That he feared his lady had fallen into the hands of a fearful necromancer, whose sole delight was to do evil; and, if it be so," said he, "without a miracle, she will be lost to you for ever. This pest to society dwells at the end of the forest. His power is so great, that he can call up the spirits of the dead to annoy the living; and, by the assistance of a legion of foul fiends, he has built himself a strong castle, which is enveloped in a continual mist, excepting only when he pleases, for the destruction of mankind, to permit it to be seen. The gate of this castle is defended by a giant-like figure in the form of a man, not made, if report speaks truth, of flesh and blood, but constructed, by magic art, of steel or adamant, so that the sharpest weapons are altogether useless, and

cannot possibly inflict a wound upon him, although he seems to possess every power and function of life that are common to mankind. Fifty brave knights, twice told, and more, have passed by my solitary cell towards that fatal habitation; but, alas!" continued he, "not one of them ever returned."

"Having said this, the hermit was silent; and the knight sat musing for a few seconds, when suddenly drawing his dagger partly from the sheath, and thrusting it back with great force, he exclaimed, "By Him who suffered dole for me upon the rood, I will perish also, or revenge the death of these brave men!" "Alas, my son!" said the hermit, "I beseech you, swear not so rashly. The attempt is not consistent with reason. It is absolute madness for a single man to attack a walking monument, aided by the machinations of a legion of foul fiends." "Holy father," replied the knight, "seek not to detain me; my resolution is irrevocably fixed:"

and then kneeling down, he besought him to shrive him of his sins, to give him absolution, and, further, to assist him with his prayers. The hermit finding that he was not to be moved, heard his confession; and, having absolved him, gave him his benediction. He then conducted him to the path which led to the castle, and grasping his hand, with tears in his eyes, bade him farewell for ever; "unless," added he, "it should please your protecting saint, that the castle shall be enveloped in darkness; you will then return to me again."

"The knight rode forward without delay, and soon came to the end of the forest, and before him appeared the lofty building; for it was this day visible. It was very extensive, and the roof of it shone like gold. Being come to the outer gate, he found it shut, and the bridge drawn up; but by the side of the postern, he saw a bugle-horn hanging by a chain of iron. He applied the horn to his

mouth, and blew three blasts so loud and shrill, that the foundations of the castle seemed to tremble. The draw-bridge was instantly let down with great noise, the gates opened, and the tremendous giant, mentioned by the hermit, rushed from the castle.

"He appeared to be about ten feet high, was completely cased in armour, and bore a mace of iron upon his shoulder. With a voice like thunder, issuing from the interstices of his helmet, for his face was not to be seen, he demanded, "What fool it was, who, being tired of life, had dared to disturb his rest?" and when, looking round, he saw the knight alone, he burst into laughter, swearing by the gods of the Pagans, that he would hang both man and horse, to bleach in the sun, upon the battlements of the castle, for his temerity. The knight, without answering him, spurred his horse, and ran at him with his lance, which broke into shivers against his armour, without even staggering

the owner. The knight then thought it advisable to descend from his horse; and a long and terrible combat ensued, in which the knight could only stand upon the defensive. At length the giant, impatient at being kept so long at bay, grasped his mace with both his hands, and thought to dash his antagonist in pieces with the blow, but the knight, seeing his danger, nimbly leaped on one side, and the giant missing his aim staggered upon the bank; the knight now seeing his advantage, ran against him with all his force, and before he could recover himself, overset him, and he fell into the lake which surrounded the castle, where he sunk in an instant, and rose no more. A dark mist, however, proceeded from the water, which the knight perceiving, and fearing the entrance would become invisible, forced his way through the portal, and over the drawbridge in the castle yard; but not without opposition from several hideous forms.

"The darkness increased so fast, that he had much difficulty to find the door which gave admittance into the castle. Having at length succeeded, he entered a large hall, in the midst of which was a pillar of porphyry, having a shield hanging on the one side, and a sword enclosed in a rich scabbard on the other, with an inscription between them, which a large lamp depending from the cieling made visible. Its import was, that the knight ordained to dissolve the enchantment of the castle, must take the sword and the shield from the pillar, and, proceeding through the dark passage opposite the lamp, descend into the vault below, where he was to find a fountain of black water, and a fire springing from the earth beyond the fountain: he was then, in defiance of all opposition, to take up a portion of the water, and to cast it upon the fire.—Beneath this inscription was another in larger characters, by way of admonition, to this effect: *Consider*

*well what thou art about to undertake; if thou failest, death is inevitable. If the least fear pervades thy mind, depart in peace, and leave to a braver mind the perils that await thee here.*

"Nothing abashed by the admonition, the knight resolutely took the sword and the shield from the pillar, and having read the uppermost inscription a second time, he entered the dark passage, which was long and narrow. In his progress he felt something like a hand that grasped him by the helmet, and endeavoured to restrain him from passing any farther. He made several efforts to strike the power that withheld him, but his sword met with no opposition. At length, with much struggling, he forced himself from the grasp, and proceeded more hastily than before; when, coming suddenly to a flight of steps, and not being in the least aware of them, he slipped down two or three, and had he not fortunately clung fast to a post that luckily projected from the wall, he would

have fallen from the top to the bottom, and probably have broken his neck by the time he had reached the latter. After this miscarriage he descended the remainder of the steps, which he found to be very numerous and exceedingly steep, with great caution; but here the same invisible power that had detained him in the passage, seemed to pursue him; and he received a great number of severe strokes, in his descent, upon his head, his arms, and his shoulders, which were often near beating him down. His sword and his shield were not of the least use in this extremity; for, though he was continually changing the position of the one, and brandishing the other, he could not protect himself from the repetition of the blows, or annoy his unseen enemy.

" At length he reached the vault, to which he had been directed by the inscription, and saw the fountain of black water falling into a very large bason of white marble; it appear-

ed in continual agitation, swelling to the brim, but did not overflow; beyond the fountain he saw the lambent flame streaming from the earth like a meteor, which cast a gloomy light over the vast cavern, but scarcely sufficient to render its various objects distinguishable. He paused a moment when he came near the bason, and looked round about him, when not perceiving any thing to oppose his progress, he concluded, the adventure was nearly accomplished; but on his approach to the bason to fill the shield, the water receded from the brim, and a huge crocodile rushed from the bottom of the bason, and attempted to seize him in its jaws; he, however, leaped back, and struck the beast upon the head with his sword, but to no effect. Its skin was so thick and so hard, that it was not possible for his sword to make the least penetration; seeing this, the knight ran to another part of the bason, and attempted again to fill the shield, but a stream of fire

like lightning proceeded from the roof of the vault, and falling upon the shield, heated it instantaneously to such a degree, that it was with great difficulty he could retain his hold, and prevent it from falling into the bason; however, he cast it upon the ground that it might cool, and instantly it appeared, by some unseen means, to be drawn hastily towards a cavity beneath the bason; to prevent which, the knight set his foot upon the middle of it, and struck at random with his sword; towards that end which was drawn forward, something resisted the blow. The shriek of a female in agony followed with loud lamentations, in a voice that pierced him to the soul, for it exactly resembled that of his beloved consort: when looking down, he perceived the shield stained with blood, and a woman's hand, with a ring upon one of the fingers, lay within it. He hastily caught the shield from the ground, and upon inspecting the ring, he perceived it to be the

same he had given to his lady on the day of their union. It is not possible to describe the horror with which the knight looked upon the bloody hand, for he doubted not but that it belonged to his wife. He called upon her by name to answer him; but the only answer he received was, *I die, I die!* in a faint voice, succeeded by a groan like that of one expiring. He kissed the hand several times, and having rent a large piece of silk from his mantle, wrapped it carefully up, and laid it upon the top of a large stone that he found by the side of the bason. In a fit of desperation, and burning with the hopes of revenge, he repeated his essay to plunge the shield into the water; but the water, as before receded from him, and the crocodile a second time made its appearance, and he was again obliged to withdraw from the brink of the bason. He now, conceiving these attempts to be in vain, formed the bold resolution of leaping upon the edge

of the bason, and fill the shield from the fountain itself; but he was instantly opposed by a fearful spectre, which rose like a black fog upon the surface of the water; and, assuming a hideous resemblance of the human form, struck him with a large mace of iron so suddenly that he could not ward off the blow, but fell backwards half stunned upon the pavement of the vault. It was some time before he recovered himself; when, rising from the ground, and leaning upon his sword, he surveyed the lake, and meditated another attempt; and though he had been so unfortunate in the last, he determined to repeat it, but with more caution. He therefore rolled a large stone to the place where he meant to mount the bason, and advancing gradually to make the first attack upon his enemy, he got upon the stone, and then setting his foot upon the brink of the bason, the spectre rose as before; but the knight striking into the midst of the dark

vapour before it had assimilated itself to the human form, it ceased to rise. He struck a second time, when a loud scream was heard behind him, but instead of turning round, he struck a third time, and the vapour disappeared. He hastily thrust the shield beneath the stream, and it was instantly filled; he descended with care, and being come to the flame, he cast the water upon it. The vault was instantly enveloped in total darkness; the gushing of waters, like mighty torrents, seemed to be roaring into it; loud shrieks were heard above, and much dreadful thunder, so that the earth was shook with the reverberation of the sounds. This horrid confusion continued for some time, and the knight now expected to be drowned in the waves, or overwhelmed with the downfal of the castle, or swallowed up by an earthquake. However, by degrees, the dark clouds disappeared, and the knight upon the return of day-light, was exceedingly surprised to

find himself in a deep dell in the midst of a wood, instead of the vault of a castle. The remains of the bason, cracked and broken, it is true appeared, but the water was gone. He came, however, to the stone where he had laid the hand of his beloved consort; and taking the wrapper to kiss it again, instead of a hand he found a small branch of a tree with five twigs issuing from it, and upon one of them a ring of woodbine. He ascended the dell by a great number of steps, which, on his coming down appeared to be stone; and at certain intervals he observed stumps of trees, with two branches somewhat resembling the arms of a man, and in what might be called their hands, was inclosed a large club like a mace headed with iron, and these were the invisible agents that buffetted the knight so severely upon his descent. The narrow passage was formed by a close avenue of trees; and the hand that detained him now appeared to be nothing more than

an empty gauntlet, attached to a strong branch from one of the trees, bent down so low, that it was necessary to stoop down in order to pass it without interruption. Being come to the end of the avenue, he entered into a spacious glade. He looked round with great surprise, but could only just discover the least vestige of the hall, where he found the pillar with the inscription; nor could he see any part of the castle. The outer wall of the moat, the draw-bridge, and gate, were all vanished. At the foot of a tall oak he found the remains of his shattered lance, and below, in the valley, he observed his horse was grazing very quietly.

"Astonished to the utmost degree at the sudden disappearance of such an extensive and massy building, he began to doubt the evidence of his own senses; "for if," said he to himself, "the whole of the castle was the fallacious effect of necromancy, what can be become of the knights and other prisoners

detained by the sorcerer? surely he did not murder them all." He then walked backward and forward upon the spot he conceived to be the scite of the castle, calling frequently aloud, that if any were prisoners, or in distress, they would answer him; and then listening attentively for some response, or groan, or noise of any kind, that might lead to the discovery, if perchance they might be confined under the ground; but receiving no answer, he determined to return to the hermit, and consult with him, what was necessary for him to do more, in order to get some tidings of his beloved spouse.

"He mounted his horse, and rode on towards the old man's, but so deeply buried in thought that he was surrounded by a large company of men in armour before he was aware, and started like a man suddenly awaked from a dream; when one of them bowing to him, with much politeness assured him, that he, and the rest of the company who were

with him, were come to salute him, and, with the utmost gratitude of heart, to thank him for their deliverance. At the same time, they presented his lady to him, and told him, that they had all been prisoners in the enchanted castle, but were at liberty upon the dissolving of the charms by which it was upheld: That the noise and confusion had been so great at the time the castle disappeared, that they, with his lady and many other females who had been confined, made their escape with all haste, and assembled together at the hermit's cell. He informed the lady, that it was her lord that had broken the enchantment; and we instantly agreed to accompany her in search of you.—And so the story ends; at least so much of it as is necessary for me to relate upon the present occasion. The combat of the knight with the iron giant; his passage through the dark entry, and the hand that withheld him; his descent into the vault, and the blow he received as he

went down; with the perils he had to encounter to obtain the enchanted water, and the changes subsequent, captivated my fancy, at the time they made me shudder."

The ladies declared, that the part which related to the hand with the ring, resembling the knight's consort's, and the exclamation supposed to come from her as she expired, had particularly affected them, because it had been brought in so very unexpectedly.

"And, we may add, so very absurdly, I presume," said the curate. "The circumstance," continued he, "that most excites my admiration is, that a man of lively imagination, assisted by even a moderate understanding, could seriously sit down to his desk, and collect together such a succession of incongruous ideas, and promulgate such a monstrous assemblage of incoherent circumstances, outraging reason, and setting even the smallest approach to truth at defiance."

"Without doubt," said Eleanor, smiling, "an iron giant, a substantial castle built with clouds, and trees metamorphosed into guards, and armed with maces, are palpable absurdities. But, notwithstanding the general outcry that is made against our romances, I do not recollect that I ever read one of them, without meeting with some passages that were amusing; and, in spite of the attendant improbabilities"——

"Say impossibilities, my good lady," interrupted the curate.

"Well, then," continued Eleanor, "in spite of the impossibilities, you have set the fancy afloat, and moved my mind in an irresistible manner."

"I thank you, my dear lady," returned the curate, "for this candid confession; and it is against this involuntary motion of the mind that I contend. It is the strongest reason that these books should never be put into the hands of young people; because the in-

fant mind ought never to be misled by falsehood, nor frighted by non-existences. Instead of complicating the primitive ideas, they ought to be kept as simple and as separate as possible, until such time as the judgement shall ripen sufficiently to appreciate their worth, and connect them together. To learn a child to read well, you must teach him not only to form the syllables which compound words require, but also previously acquaint him with the value and importance of every letter singly by itself. One of the greatest sources of ignorance and superstition, is the exposition of falsities to the minds of such as are too young to discriminate for themselves; and superstition, having once taken possession of the mind, like the very enchanters and giants with which your romances abound, binds its captive in chains, and not only prevents any future progress of science, but often deludes it with false appearances, and puts a sword in its hand to fight in the

defence of its task-master, and resist the attempts of the benevolent champion who comes to free it from its chains; that is to say, the mind thoroughly grounded in prejudices early received, will resist the voice of truth, and combat the very means by which it must be freed from the shackles of error. If it be true, and I declare I believe it to be true, that the infant mind is like a blank skin of fair parchment, how careful ought we to be, that nothing be inscribed upon it but what is consistent with truth, clearly, as, in all probability, it will be indelibly written! For the first inscriptions are rarely totally erased; and even when they are, however strong and valuable those may be which are brought forward to supply their place, they will never stand so fair and perfect as if no change had been necessary."

"Surely," cried Eleanor, hastily, "you do not seriously think that I believe in these giants, and enchanters, and spectres?"

"No, my dear lady: I am well aware that your good sense, and the liberal education you have received, has convinced you, that the achievements of the heroes of romance are mere fables. I still, however, contend, that they have a moral tendency to mislead the mind, and to fill it with inflated expectations and sensations, that, expanding its faculties too suddenly, exert the powers of imagination to form a picture of human felicity that can never be realised; which, of course, will cast a shade of insipidity upon real life."

"Surely not," returned Eleanor, "where the stories are not believed."

"Yes," answered the curate, "even in the minds that do not credit them, these stories have a degree of pernicious tendency, by showing, as I have just observed, the general circumstances of life through a false medium, and by magnifying human pride, which needs, in general, no stimulus to exalt itself. You will,

perhaps, agree with me, that the perusal of these books occasions, at least, a loss of time, that might have been better employed upon the investigation of the works of nature, or rather of the God of nature, and a search after truth. In the course of this discussion, I have not called in the most powerful argument against the propagation of falsehood; namely, that it is contrary to the commandments of religion, which requires us to search diligently after the truth; because, say the holy scriptures, "God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth." But, with your permission, I will now advert to the evil arising from the promulgation of these pernicious falsehoods among the lower classes of the people. Few of them can read; to such these stories are related by others, frequently from memory only, and seldom without additions, if possible, more preposterous than are to be found in the ori-

ginals themselves. They usually form a large part of a winter's night's conversation, and are overheard by the children in the very dawn of life. I have seen myself the old gossips seated in a semicircle, and hedging in the perishing embers of the fire, and so affrighted by their own tales, that no one has had courage to fetch a faggot from the outhouse to replenish the blaze; while the little urchins, seated in the chimney corners, have been anxiously staring their instructors in the face, and shivering with affright. Hence arises in their minds a wild confusion of ideas; spectres without heads, ghosts as tall as the church-tower, hobgoblins with saucer eyes, and the whole troop of witches, devils, and dragons, are indelibly stamped upon their imaginations; for these impressions not only operate powerfully at the moment of recital, but remain, at best, like the scars of deep wounds, even when the ripened reason

and instruction shall have removed the fallacy of such idle stories; and, where neither reason nor instruction are called forward to encounter these prejudices, it naturally follows, that the gloom of superstition will pervade the whole mind, and stories, still more absurd than those you have recited, will be received as real facts. One need only refer to the gossips above mentioned, several of whom, I know, believe in the popular stories of witchcraft, goblins, haunted castles, and other trumpery of romance, as faithfully as they do in the sacred oracles of truth; and while these are the tutors to whose tales the young mind first opens itself, there can be little chance that the evil can be remedied."

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Here concluded a conversation, which the reader may peradventure have thought tedi-

ous; and, after some ceremonies of adieu, not necessary to be described, the baron mounting his steed, and the ladies their palfreys, they returned, with their retinue, to Queenhoo-Hall.

On the morrow, as, after their matin repast, the baron discoursed with the ladies on the subject of the former day's conversation, he was suddenly interrupted by the winding of a horn, followed by steps approaching the hall, the door of which was thrown wide by one of the baron's domestics.

## CHAPTER II.

*The Introduction of a new Character, of great Importance in the Piece; and the Sequel of the Adventure achieved by the Knight of the Bleeding Heart, which produces an unexpected Discovery.*

THE interruption given to the conversation, as noticed in the foregoing chapter, was occasioned by the entrance of a page, who advanced towards the Lady Matilda, and on one knee presented to her a gipsire, richly embroidered with gold and silver threads on a blue ground, having the cognizance of the Boteler family on the front, and the four corners ornamented with tassels of gold.

The singularity of this circumstance sur-

prised the company; and the Lady Matilda enquired of the page, from whom the present came? "Indeed, Gervise," continued she, "I think there must be some mistake."

"Truly, my lady," returned the page, "I know not who sent the gift: a messenger, richly bedight in a horseman's habit, booted and spurred, followed by two pages in new liveries of silk, edged with gold, just now entered the hall; when the messenger, taking the gipsire from a velvet pouch, and kneeling on one knee, put it into my hand, commanding me to present it in the same manner to you, my lady; but without mentioning its contents, or the name of the person who commissioned him to deliver it."

"You have but half performed your duty, then, Gervise," said Lord Boteler; "go back to the hall, and make particular enquiry concerning the sender."

The page obeyed; but, returning an instant afterward, declared, that the messenger

and his followers were gone, without leaving any farther information on the subject.

Gervise having withdrawn, the conversation turned on the extraordinary occurrence.

"Indeed," said the Lady Matilda, "I have no expectation of any such present; neither can I, in the least, conjecture, who could send it to me."

"Doubtless," said the Lady Eleanor, taking the gipsire into her hand, "the purse contains something of consequence; perchance some curious piece of needle-work. I beseech you open it."

"You may, so please you, my cousin," said Matilda.

"And in truth I will," said she, "if his lordship give me permission."

The baron consented: when, instead of needle-work, as Eleanor had conjectured, she drew forth a small packet, sealed and super-

scribed, in letters of gold, "To the most excellent Lady Matilda Boteler."

"The address," exclaimed Eleanor, laughing, "is gallant indeed: The inside, which in sooth I have nothing to do with, is, I doubt not, equally brilliant."

Lord Boteler gravely desired Eleanor to give him the letter. He broke the silk thread, which surrounded it; and having perused the contents, seemed much surprised: then, addressing his daughter, "Your champion, my Matilda, seems to be a lover in earnest. Listen to his address to you:

"Most adorable Lady,

"The Knight of the wounded Heart, your slave and professed champion, humbly salutes you; and with the baron your noble father's consent, will pay his respects to you in person this day."

"Indeed I will not see him," replied the

lady; "I hope, my good lord, (addressing herself to the baron,) you will cause the gates to be shut against him."

"By no means, my dear child," returned Lord Edward; "he shall have free admission: his dignity as a knight demands so much; besides, it is proper that we should see him: for through him alone can we hope for an explanation of the mystery relating to this chaplet. And I will promise you, Lady Emma, he shall not readily depart, without acquainting us by what means the jewel came into his possession."

While they were thus discoursing, a loud knocking was heard at the gate.

"Here comes the knight," says the baron.

"Then," said the Lady Emma, turning pale, "let me not see him: let me not see my brother's murderer."

She trembled much, and the young ladies

led her out of the room, and they returned to the chamber.

The baron expected to see the knight armed cap-a-pee; but instead of the Knight of the bleeding Heart, the young Saint Clere, already mentioned as a favourite at court, a friend of the baron, and an expected visitant at Queenhoo-Hall, was announced and entered. The baron caught him in his arms, and welcomed him to Queenhoo-Hall.

When the compliments of greeting were over, the young courtier enquired after the ladies; and the baron, summoning one of his servants, desired, that the ladies might be informed, that the Chevalier Saint Clere had done him the honour of a visit. Matilda blushed at hearing his name, which did not pass unnoticed by her cousin, who rallied her thereupon.

"The stranger lady begs to be excused from going down with them, alleging the fright occasioned by the thought of seeing

the man who had possessed the garland had so much affected her, that she could only, by the gloominess of her appearance, cast a damp upon the cheerfulness of such a meeting. "Indeed, I feel myself very faint; and, with your permission, will lay my head upon the pillow for a while, perhaps I may be able to obtain a little rest, which will refresh me." They then apologized for leaving her, and Matilda sent her own servants to attend upon her.

When they entered the room, Saint Clere, rising from his seat, approached them gracefully, saluted their hands, and led them to the upper end of the hall; and placing their seats beside the baron's, sat himself next to Matilda.

The conversation turned upon ordinary subjects, and especially respected the disappointments that many had met with by the king's sudden removal from St Alban's, which

prevented the tournament, for which great preparations had been made.

" But indeed," said the baron, " my daughter and her cousin were not so much disappointed as many were, for they had their tournament at home; but the victorious knight, instead of being rewarded, bestowed rewards, and then disappeared, without any one being able to discover whence he came, or whither he went; or whether he was goblin, or flesh and blood like other men."

" Why, that is marvellous; and pray, my lord, what did he find to fight with?"

" I'll assure you," cried Eleanor, " he had wherewithal to manifest his skill and his courage: he vanquished a great giant sent by the Queen of the Fairies to proclaim her beauty; and made him confess, that my cousin Matilda was the sun, and her diminutive majesty the moon only; for which reason,

she ought to confine herself to her midnight orgies."

"Fie, cousin," interrupted Matilda; "you know that it was only a May-game."

"The champion, however, was certainly in the right," said Saint Clere.

"Then," said Eleanor, in a whisper to her cousin, "is not that the very turn, the air, and expression of the portrait?"

Matilda made no answer, but nodded her head in token of acquiescence. The chevalier, seeing how closely they watched him, was a little confused; but recovering himself speedily, the baron thus addressed him :—

"The king's sudden departure from St Alban's led me to suppose, that the rebellion in the north had been much more formidable than it appeared to be, and occasioned an alarm, which I suppose is hardly yet entirely subsided."

At mid-day, the board was spread with all the magnificence which became the house of

Boteler; and the afternoon past in cheerful and delectable discourse of love and arms. But at the approach of evening, Saint Clere informed the baron, that he had some letters of consequence to write, and particular orders to give to his servants charged with the delivery of them. The baron then led him into the library, where he assured him he should meet with no interruption. Saint Clere sat down at the writing-desk; his servants were summoned, and the baron withdrew. The baron then took Fitzallen a turn in the garden; and, in the mean time, the ladies took the opportunity of visiting the fair stranger.

At the close of the day, the attention of the company was diverted by the clangour of trumpets sounded in the outer court, answered by the shouts of the populace.

"No doubt," said the baron, "the unknown champion is now come; he approaches, like a man of battle, with a great train."

Matilda was somewhat fluttered by the suddenness of the blast; but soon recovered herself, and assumed a cheerful air, to avoid the raillery of her cousin; and the baron, smiling, promised to protect them. Two pages entered the room, and ushered in the chief herald, who, in his master's name, the Knight of the bleeeding Heart, requested an audience with Lord Boteler and Lady Matilda. His Lordship consented, and said, that he might be conducted into the great hall.

The herald withdrew. The baron and the ladies went into the hall, where, taking their seats, the knight entered, habited as he had been upon the first of May, and masked in the same manner. He was followed by his five esquires, with a numerous retinue of pages. Approaching the high deas, he put one knee to the ground; and bowing first to the ladies, and then to Lord Boteler, he said:—

"My lord, I know not what punishment your lordship may think due to my temerity, for assuming the cognizance of your noble family, and declaring myself, without permission, to be your lovely daughter's champion. I am well convinced, such honour far transcends my merit."

"'Tis gallantly said," replied the baron; "but now the May-games are over, the pageantry that might then be the occasion of innocent pastime is prolonged beyond its proper limits; and for this reason, I, as her father, demand of you, upon the honour of true knighthood, to inform me, without disguise, what is the end and purpose of this untimely proceeding. You know, or ought to know, sir knight, I am not a man to be trifled with; nor shall you be permitted to depart, until I have full satisfaction upon this mysterious subject."

"Lord Edward Boteler, I know you well, nor am I less well known to you; the blood

that animates these veins is noble and uncontaminated by baseness. There is a reason, aye and a cogent one, that makes me wish to wave an answer now to the latter part of your speech. I must, however, add, that if it had come from the lips of another, it should have shut up my tongue. The heart unused to fear, is not easily awed by threatenings. Speak, then, Lord Boteler, and I will truly answer you."

"There is a freedom in your manner that much pleases me," returned the baron; "and I sincerely wish you may so answer my interrogatories, as to remove the suspicion which belongs to some part of that day's adventures."

"Speak out, my lord, and if it shall be found that I flinch from the truth, let me be degraded from the honours of knighthood, and punished as a traitor."

"I have one witness more to call, and I

beseech you have the patience for a few minutes."

The baron then commanded of the attendants to go, and, if possible, prevail upon the Lady Emma Darcy to come into the hall; and while they were absent, he thus addressed the knight :—

"What made you so much signalize my daughter?"

"Because I love her."

"But did you not know, she had a father?"

"Yes, and therefore am I come: and though I love her dearly, as my life, I have not told her so. Honour required I should have your consent."

"You much astonish me," replied the baron.—

And at this instant the young ladies returned, leading the stranger deeply veiled, and they seated her between them to support

her; for she trembled, and seemed very much agitated.

The stranger eyed her with great firmness, but did not appear to be the least moved at what passed.

The baron then caused the garland to be brought; and holding it to the knight, enquired, if he knew that ornament?

" I know it well."

" It seems you do so. How came you by it? Did you purchase it?

" No.

" How came you by it then?"

" By heirship. She that once owned it now is dead; and in her right, 'twas mine."

" False! False!" exclaimed the stranger.

" Who says 'tis false?" said the knight, much agitated: " By Heavens, 'tis true; and in the foremost rose, you'll find the portrait of an armed man."

" We know it well," replied the baron;

and who is that armed man there represented? Do you know him?"

"Yes."

"Who is it?"

"'Tis myself."

"Thyself!" exclaimed the baron.

"Yes," said he, shooting up, and elevating the vizor; "compare the copy with the original."

"Good heavens! Saint Clere!" cried the baron.

"Saint Clere!" said Matilda and Eleanor.

The fair stranger exclaimed:—

"'Tis, 'tis my brother!" and fainted.

All was in confusion. Saint Clere, who knew nothing of what had happened relative to the chaplet, and intended only a piece of mirthful gallantry, was alarmed at the tragical issue of the pageant; and approaching the lady, whose veil her companions had thrown back for the sake of the air, cried out:—

"All gracious Heaven! 'tis she! 'tis my sister!" and clasping her in his arms, he brought her near to the door.

This afforded fresh matter for astonishment. Matilda and Eleanor stood looking on each other, without knowing what to say; and the baron, rising from his seat, said:—

"By holy St George, but this is strange indeed; the winding this mystery may well match our most marvellous romances!"

When the newly discovered relations were able to converse with composure, Saint Clere briefly related, that, being to visit Queenhoo-Hall, by the baron's invitation, he had contrived the pageant, in which he acted, "in order," he said, "to give a romantic turn to the adventure; and on our coming to Tewin, I found every thing prepared, as it were on purpose, for my reception, by mere accident; and that the ladies would be present at the May-games desired by my lord's servants. No sooner were they concluded, than we be-

gan, to the no small amusement of the persons assembled. In the evening, we returned to St Alban's, without being discerned by any person. I hasted after the king, and reached him at Warwick, where we received the news, that the insurrection was quelled; and the court prepared the day following to return to London."

Nothing could exceed the contentment of these noble persons, at the winding up thus happily of these mysterious events. The Lady Emma hardly could credit the evidence of her senses, that her beloved brother was yet alive and in safety, and in the favour too of his sovereign, through which she joyfully anticipated (though more on his account than her own) the restoration of the honours and dignities of their family. Her wonderment at the chances which had befallen him, and the questions she had to ask in relation to every particular of his fate, since their sad parting, were endless; she marvelled greatly

also, why he had supposed her dead; but to all queries the young Lord Henry turned a deaf ear, saying, "Nay, nay, sister mine, defer till to-morrow these kind and anxious inquiries. To-morrow I shall, with the good leave of this noble and most gracious company, narrate the whole chain of mine adventures; but, to-day, remember, I am the Knight of the bleeding Heart, and the champion of the fair Lady Matilda; and I shall not therefore divert one hour of my devoted service to her, nor incroach on the passing cheerfulness of this much wished for day, by the narration of any tristful adventures, for such my story will be found to contain."

The Lady Emma's eyes filled at this termination of the young baron's speech; but wiping away a tear, and smiling playfully, she said, "Nay, brother, sure am I, if you are a true knight to the Lady Matilda's service, I shall have so much grace with that Lady, as to prevail on her to exert her autho-

rity, and to command you to satisfy my curiosity;" then turning to Matilda, "Shall I, sweet lady, or no?" added she.

The Lady Matilda, profoundly blushing, and casting a downward look towards Saint Clere and his sister, attempted to faulter a reply; whereat Lord Boteler, observing the confusion of his daughter, took up the conversation, and said, "As my power over Matilda is yet paramount, I shall interdict the exercise of her's over the young knight, at least till he hath unarmed, and tasted the hospitality of Queenhoo-Hall." So turning to the seneschal, who was in waiting, he commanded him, that the young Lord Henry's esquires and retinue should partake of the best cheer of the hall and kitchen; and graciously taking the Lady Emma's hand, he led her forth, the Lord Fitzallen accompanying the Lady Eleanor, and Saint Clere escorting the Lady Matilda.

While the young Lord Henry was unarm-

ing, and the ladies were left alone, "I foresee," said the Lady Eleanor, who, to the graces of innocence and simplicity, united an arch turn of mind; "I foresee, fair cousin, that the events of this day, romantic as they doubtless are, will terminate, like all other romances, in love and matrimony; unless forsooth you send forth your champion to a seven years probation of arms, in the conquest of giants, and rescue of distressed damsels."

"Thou wilt ever banter, cousin," said Lady Matilda.

"Nay," cried Lady Eleanor, "I would not distress you; but there is something so wonderous in this reciprocal attachment! so sudden! Doth it not resemble enchantment, Lady Emma?"

"I doubt," replied the gentle Emma, "the adventure will want one characteristic of enenchantment, viz. its falsehood; as I trust, I may presume to hope, that my amiable bro-

ther's merits, after being duly proven, may entitle him to look up so high, as to the Lady Matilda Boteler; for I confess, from the first moment I saw her, I thought them formed for each other."

Lady Matilda bowed gracefully, and blushed, adding, "That it was no small recommendation to her, were any necessary to so accomplished a chevalier as the Lord Henry Saint Clere, that he was so closely connected with a lady so amiable as his sister."

The bell announcing supper, now broke up the conversation of these ladies, who descended mutually pleased with each other. After a repast, in which every circumstance which could be gratifying to the feelings of the noble parties concurred, on the ladies expressing fatigue, the party broke up for the evening, and retired to their several apartments.

Next morning, after breakfast, Lord Henry Darcy commenced the narration of his adventures, in the following terms.

## CHAPTER II.

*The Adventures of Henry Darcy, Lord Saint Clere.—His Peril at the Inn, and Miraculous Escape.*

"In parting from my dear Emma, I experienced an unusual depression of spirits, and, more than once, I repented that I had not insisted on sitting up with her the whole of the night; but the great recommendation given by the hostess of her beds, and the apparent candour of the host, operated very strongly in removing every serious suspicion of evil.

"The innkeeper ushered me to my chamber, and, having lighted the lamp, he en-

quired, at what time I chose to be called in the morning? I told him, if the weather should prove fair, my wish was to rise soon after day-break. Having received my answer, he bowed, and, committing me to the protection of God and his saints, he withdrew. I then fastened the door of my room, and threw off my mantle, my surcoat, and my pourpoint; but, without displacing my hose, I laid myself upon the bed, and drew my mantle over me as a substitute for the coverlet, which was too thick and warm for the season. I endeavoured to sleep, but a strange foreboding of some evil accident occupied my mind; the storm seemed to be increased; the thunder was very loud; and the wind, whistling through the crevices of the casement, extinguished my lamp; but the reiterated glare of the lightning amply supplied its deficiency. It was turned of midnight before I closed my eyes in sleep, and I was very soon awakened by the drawing back of the

bolt of my door. It opened, and I saw a lanthorn, with no light but in the front, approaching my bed-side. It was impossible for me to make an attack upon the person who carried the light without imminent danger, for I did not doubt his being well armed. I therefore resolved to counterfeit a deep sleep. He came up close to me, and holding the lanthorn in his left hand before my eyes, with his right he presented a sharp baselard to my throat, saying, at the same time, in a low tone of voice, *Young gentleman, it is time to rise.* I made no reply; but, seeming to sleep soundly, he retired from the bed, and going towards a cabinet, at one corner of the room, he essayed to force it open; but meeting with much resistance, and fearing that I should be awakened by the noise, he returned to me, and holding the light and knife in the manner he had done before, repeated the same words. I still pretended to be asleep, and he renewed his attack upon the cabinet

with more success. I saw him take thence several goblets and other vessels, apparently of silver; but, in opening one of the drawers, he made more noise than usual, which brought him to me a third time as before. Receiving no answer, he returned; but, as he was putting the spoils into a wallet he had brought with him for that purpose, the cover of one of the goblets fell upon the floor, and, pitching upon its edge, it rolled round several times before he could stop it; and, in order to catch it the more readily, he laid the baselard upon a stool by the side of the cabinet, and stooped down upon one of his knees. I watched the moment, and conceiving that my life depended upon a single effort, (for no doubt he was convinced, that so much noise must have awakened me,) I cast of my mantle, sprung from the bed, and, throwing myself upon his back, thrust him to the ground, and holding his arms down to prevent his rising or striking me, I called out as loud as I

could for assistance, when suddenly I received a blow upon my head, which deprived me of all sensation.

"When I came to my recollection, I found myself in an army-spittal, surrounded with invalids;—they were soldiers, and my countrymen. I was prodigiously surprised at my situation; and, as soon as I was permitted to talk to my comrades, I learned from them, that I had been discovered, nearly naked and covered with blood, in a wood near the place, by a company of soldiers, who were out that way upon the forage, and the commanding officer perceiving some faint signs of life, had humanely caused me to be wrapped up in a warm houpland, and conveyed to the spittal. I was farther informed, that I had been there better than fourteen days, suffering under a dreadful fever, and frequently delirious; at which times I called for a young lady, my sister, and spake of punishing the murderer. The word *sister*, with the succeed-

ing clause, brought suddenly to my mind the recollection of the horrors of that dreadful night in which we had been separated. I could no longer contain myself with patience, but, starting upright upon my couch, exclaimed, with great energy, "All-gracious Heaven! where is she? where is that sister?"

Here Emma burst into tears; and, turning from the company, hid her face with her kerchief. Her agitation was not unnoticed by St Clere; he therefore moderated his tone of voice, and continued the narrative.

"My comrades, fearing that I was relapsing to my former state of delirium, begged of me not to exert myself so much, and would not answer me any farther questions.

"The leech soon afterwards came to dress my wounds, and observing that I was calmer than usual, and that the fever was considerably abated, entered into conversation with me. When he found that I was an Englishman of family, and had heard the detail of

my misfortune, he promised to cause immediate enquiry to be made after my sister.—"You may safely trust to me upon that account," said he; "but, on your own, I must beseech you to compose yourself. You are by no means past danger, and rest is absolutely necessary for you, if you wish for life; and surely you ought to live, if it be only for your sister's sake. If she be alive, she may need your protection; if she be dead, who is there so proper as yourself to bring the murderer to justice." His promises much quieted my mind, and some cordials that he administered procured me rest; so that, in the course of two or three days more, I was sufficiently recovered to leave my bed, and walk out into the fresh air.

"I had received, it seems, no less than nine wounds in the body, in addition to that upon my head, which was by far the most dangerous. The captain, to whose kindness I owed my preservation, hearing that I was

able to walk about, did me the honour of a visit. I expressed my gratitude to him in the most pointed terms that I was master of; and the politeness with which he received my address, proved at once the goodness of his heart, and the excellence of his education.

"I assumed the name of St Clere, and my good friend, who had heard of the family, and their consequence in Essex, promised to present me to the regent, Richard Earl of Warwick, who then kept his court at Abbeville. He was as good as his word; and I being furnished, by his generosity, with a suit of garments becoming my rank, was introduced to the earl, who, having heard a brief recital of my misfortune, received me with every mark of attention. I volunteered into the service, and his excellency promised me the first company that should be vacant; in the mean time, I was ranked as a lieutenant, and placed under his immediate inspection.

" But, my dearest Emma, I see your eyes reproach me. They seem to say, And where the while was the anxiety, the solicitude, you ought to have entertained for the sufferings of a sister?—In very truth, my dear sister, you was not forgotten; I was not ungrateful.

" You may remember, that the physician promised that every enquiry should be made concerning your situation, nor did he fail in the execution of his promise; for, having consulted with the captain, to whom he communicated the information I had given to him, they employed for the purpose the ancient, a discreet and sober man, and one who had frequently been entrusted with matters of great consequence, and he took with him a small party of soldiers, in order to release you in case they found you detained by force. He did not think it proper to show himself first at the inn, for fear of creating some alarm, but stopped with his party at a cot-

tage about a mile distant, where he met with an old lady, from whom he learned, that the people of the inn had been twice examined before the magistrates of the district, through the interposition of a foreign nobleman, but that nothing had transpired to criminate them respecting the loss of the young gentleman, said to have been murdered in their house, and, of course, they were set at liberty; but that the young lady had been removed to the convent just by; that her friends had been sent for, who appeared to her justification; and that she herself had departed thence two days previous to their arrival. The ancient having heard this recital, very properly judged, that the best use he could make of his time, was to go to the convent immediately; which he did, and, with some small difficulty, obtained an interview with the lady-abbess. He related to her the manner in which I was miraculously preserved from death, and begged, on my

account, to be fully informed concerning the lady, my sister. From her mouth he received a detail of the treatment you had met with; your dangerous indisposition; your happy recovery; the visit you received from our dear friend; and your departure for England.—Such was the import of the good ancient's information.

"You will readily imagine, that the recital of your sufferings made a deep impression upon my mind; my anxiety, however, was in some degree alleviated, by the hope that you had safely reached England, and I doubted not you would find an affectionate reception at Gay Bowers. I addressed a letter immediately to my uncle, (for I was not then informed of his death,) in which I entreated him to receive you with great tenderness, and to acquaint you with my wonderful recovery from the wounds I had received in the chamber of the inn.—You shake your head; of course, then, you never saw that letter.—

No, Gaston is—— But I shall have reason to speak concerning him anon.

"The moment I was capable of taking the field, I did not let slip one single opportunity of exerting myself as a soldier; and having been successful in several skirmishes, in which I had engaged by choice, I gained the good opinion of the regent; and one of the companies becoming vacant, he remembered his promise, and I was appointed the captain. Soon after my promotion, my patron died, and the Duke of York succeeded him in his dignities.

"In the celebrated attack, made by the English forces, upon the camp of Charles the Fifth of France, as the duke was passing the Ouse, his horse was slain under him, and his person in great danger, which being seen by me, I urged my company to follow me. We passed the water, nearly up to our chins, and arrived time enough to assist his Excellency. The land-

ing, though obstinately opposed, was made good, and the enemy was defeated with great slaughter. The spirited behaviour of the troops, under my command, was highly commended by the Duke; who sent for me as soon as the battle was over, and graciously attributing, to the service my men had performed, much of the success of the action, was pleased to knight me in the field, at the head of our army.

"Charles fled with much precipitation, and the regent pursued him to Ponthein, which place was taken by the English forces.

"The French army, meantime, stood aloof; and although various methods, on our part, were used to provoke them to battle, they all of them failed; insomuch that the King was suspected of cowardice by his own soldiers, and many of his subjects openly expressed their disapprobation of his conduct, and symptoms of revolt appeared in the army itself. In order, therefore, to regain the

confidence of the people, he returned suddenly to Ponthein, at a time the regent, who had no suspicion of such a movement, was absent, and attacked the place with so much impetuosity, that it was carried before the English army could arrive to afford it succour; and Charles himself, it is said, was among the first that entered the city. This action, which proved his valour, restored him to the favour of the soldiers, and his army daily increased by recruits, who flocked around the royal standard. The regent afterwards retreated to Abbeville, in order to wait for reinforcements, which had been promised him; but, before their arrival, overtures for a truce were proposed, and the terms being acceded to on both sides, the commissioners were appointed to meet at Calais, and the war was concluded for a time.

"While our forces lay at Ponthein, the Duke of York one day sent for me, and,

when I appeared before him, he said, "Come hither, Saint Clere, I have a commission for you to execute; I have promised, to a noble lady of our court, a present, from France, of some jewellery. Now, as I am not well versed in the excellency of these ornaments, and having heard that you have a taste for them, I am desirous that you should go into Pontheim, and purchase for me one of the most elegant carcanets of goldsmith's work, embellished with oriental pearls, that you can meet with: let it be very rich, and exquisitely wrought; because I am particularly anxious the gift should be esteemed well worthy of the lady's acceptance."—" But the price, my lord," said I.—" That," replied he, " I leave entirely to you: if you shall find a jewel that pleases you, let not that be an object." I then promised his Grace, that I would exert my utmost ability to give him satisfaction, but added, at the same time, I was very fearful he would find that my judg-

ment had been greatly over-rated. "Be not concerned upon that account," said he, smiling; "I make no doubt I shall be well pleased with your purchase." I bowed, and withdrew.

"I went into several shops where articles of jewellery were exposed to sale, without meeting with a chevesail, or carcanet, sufficiently beautiful to answer my purpose. However, upon my return, I had a carcanet put into my hands, which pleased me exceedingly; and, while I was bargaining with the goldsmith for the purchase, in an inner-room, he was called forth to the shop. In a few minutes he returned; and, after apologising for his leaving me alone, he said, with a smile, had you enquired for a chaplet, instead of a chevesail, I could now supply you to your wish. "See, sir," said he, presenting a chaplet, "there is one. I think I never saw its equal, either for the elegancy of its ornaments, the materials with which it is com-

posed, or the excellency of its workmanship."—"Is it possible?" cried I, taking it in my hand.—"Truly, sir," returned he, "one would hardly think it possible. I have been many years in my profession, and dealt largely in jewels of this kind, but, in truth, I never saw a more rich or more beautiful chaplet in my life."—"In the name of Heaven," said I, impatiently, "whence had you this jewel!" He instantly replied, "It is but this moment put into my hands by a man, who waits without to know, if I will purchase it from him."—"Purchase it, my friend! Yes," added I, starting from my seat, "nor spare for price." The goldsmith was greatly surprised at seeing me so much agitated at the sight of the chaplet, and replied, "You seem to know somewhat respecting this jewel."—"Yes," said I, "more than you suspect. It was my sister's: it was stolen from her, and I was nearly murdered by the thief. Perhaps the very man, who brings it,

is the thief; it is, therefore, proper, that he should give a fair account how it came into his possession; and, for this purpose, I claim your assistance. It may prove the means of detecting a murder, and bringing him to justice."—"Speak lower, sir," replied the goldsmith, still more astonished by my assertions, "or he may be alarmed, and make his escape. If you are positive respecting the jewel, I will call him hither, where you may have an opportunity of examining him yourself; for he has other jewls, and some plate to dispose of." I applauded his precaution, and, assuring him that I was not mistaken respecting the chaplet, begged that he might be introduced.

I placed myself behind the door, so that, when he entered the room, he could not readily perceive me, but, at the same time, I could easily seize upon him, if occasion required, and prevent his escape; but the jeweller, unknown to me, had taken a further

precaution, and sent for two officers of justice to wait without the issue of the examination. The man very readily followed the jeweller into the room, who led him towards the light, and then enquired what other articles of this kind he had to sell. "None," said he, "like that; but here is a broach of gold set with pearls, a carcanet, and a goblet of silver; but I have had the misfortune to lose the cover." —"The articles you have offered to sale," said the goldsmith, "are certainly valuable ones, and I should have no objection to become a purchaser; but, at the same time, I must observe, it is dangerous for me to do so from one who is a perfect stranger. You must not, therefore, be offended with me for wishing to know by what means they came into your possession."—"Not in the least," said he, with an air of confidence, "the question is a fair one.—You must know, sir, that I am an innkeeper at Amiens, and reside at the sign of Saint Denis. It happened,

some little time back, that several English officers took up their lodging with me, where they lived always in the stile of noblemen, and run up so huge a score that I was nearly ruined. It was impossible to bring them to any proper reckoning, and at last I was obliged to take these articles, with several others of like kind, in the stead of money. Some of them I sold at home, and, being obliged to come hither upon some business of consequence, I was desirous of knowing what these would bring me in a foreign market."—" And what may you judge they are worth?" answered the jeweller. To which he readily answered, " You know their worth much better than I. They are articles I never dealt in before: but a thousand crowns would not make me amends for the expences I have been at; and very possibly I may have undervalued them."—" Certainly," said I, coming forward with my face partly covered by the tippet of my hood, " you have greatly under-

valued them! But I desire to know how long you have been master of the Hotel of Saint Denis?" The unexpected interruption from me, and the question I proposed, produced evident signs of confusion in his countenance. Recollecting himself, however, he replied, "About ten years."—"Not so many months past, to my own knowledge, it was occupied by one, who bore not the least resemblance to you. But, villain!" cried I, advancing closer to him, "dost thou not know, who slept at the inn near * * *, when the tempest compelled him and his sister to take shelter there?" Thus saying, I threw back my hood; and the moment he saw my face, he fell upon a bench, which stood behind him, like one bereft of his senses: he stared as though his eyes would have started from their sockets; and his hair stood upright. As soon as he could give utterance to his speech, he exclaimed, "It is his ghost! Saints defend me! It is the chevalier's

ghost!" and was making towards the door. "No! thou catif," said I, interposing and stopping him, "thou shalt learn, to thy confusion, that I am not a ghost." In the meantime, the goldsmith had called the officers, who entered the room armed with their brown-bills, and, seizing upon the trembling culprit, eased me of my charge.

"It may be proper to observe, that the moment I saw the face of this man, I recognized the features of the hostler, who took care of our horses at the inn, on the night of the robbery. And the signs of guilt which he manifested at my mentioning the circumstances of that event, were sufficient proof, to me, that I had not been mistaken. On his part, when he saw himself secured, he assumed a sullen air, and would not answer any interrogation that I put to him. We therefore took him before the provost, to whom I briefly related the manner, in which I had been nearly murdered in the inn, on

the night when the robbery was committed, and proved the identity of the chaplet, by describing the cognizance of our family, which is concealed beneath the rose-leaf, upon the front of the jewel. The robber declared, that he was altogether innocent of the crimes alleged against him; that he never was at the inn where I asserted the robbery to have been committed, but, on the contrary, insisted upon it, that he was the master of the Hotel Saint Denis, of Amiens, and that the jewels and plate had been put into his possession by a party of English officers, in the manner he had previously affirmed. The circumstances, however, appeared sufficiently strong against him to invalidate his assertions, and to warrant his detention, and he was committed to prison.

" It was then judged necessary to send to Amiens, and to * * * and confront him with the testimony of both the innkeepers; for I assured the magistrate, that the master

of the Saint Denis, where I dined a few hours preceding the robbery, did not bear the least resemblance in person or features to the man; and the other, who I now believed was not implicated in the guilt of his servant, would readily acknowledge him to have been such.

"Having paid the purchase money for the carcanet, I took it to the Duke, who honoured my choice with his entire approbation. I took the liberty of relating to his grace the extraordinary event that had happened at the goldsmith's, which so far excited his curiosity, that he determined himself to be present at the next examination of the culprit, which took place as soon as the two innkeepers were brought to Ponthein.

"When the prisoner was brought into court, and questioned concerning the robbery, he continued to assert his innocence, and still persisted in being the innkeeper at Amiens, notwithstanding the real master of

the Hotel of Saint Denis appeared to confront him. "I am sorry, Eustace," said the host, "to find myself necessitated to appear against you. For the good of your soul, add not such falsehoods to your other offences; confess what you know of the foul dealing laid to your charge, and endeavour, by your contrition, to assuage the anger of Heaven." He held down his head, but returned no answer. "You know the prisoner, it seems," said the duke to the innkeeper. "Perfectly, my lord; he has frequently been at my house, as a guide to passengers, and to take back their horses, when hired at his master's."—"And what was your opinion of him?"—"In sooth, my lord," replied the host, "I believed him to be a sober and an honest man." Several questions were then put to the culprit, but he pertinaciously refused to return any answer. The torture was then proposed, but his Excellency desired, that it might be deferred until they had heard

the examination of the other innkeeper; who was accordingly brought into the court, and, being desired to look at the prisoner, instantly exclaimed, "It is Eustace! my faithful hostler. By the crown of Saint Louis, I am surprised to find thee here! Poor knave, I'll lay my life he is innocent."—"Of that hereafter," said the duke, hastily; "but we have some questions to ask you, and shall request you to answer them without any comment. You know the man, he was your hostler?"—"He was, your honour," replied the host.—"And how long has he left your service?"—"Some three moons back: and please your honour, I cannot be certain for a day or two."—"It shall not need; but inform us why he quitted your house; what was his fault?"—"No fault, your honour; but because a relation of his had died, and bequeathed to him a mort of money."—"You parted, then, good friends?"—"Exactly so, your honour."—"And have you not seen him since that

time?"—"Never, your honour, till this moment."

"His Grace then desired that I should stand forward; and, ordering the innkeeper to survey me with attention, he enquired, if he had any recollection of my features. After looking earnestly at me, some time, he answered in the negative. The duke desired him to repeat his examination. He did so; and, at last, with some degree of agitation, replied, "I think, (but surely my eyes deceive me,) I think he resembles a young chevalier, who slept at my house the night I was robbed, and who, (God forgive me,) I really took to be the thief. To which I answered, "I am in truth that chevalier, and the thief himself, if I mistake not, is also near at hand."

"The articles, which the prisoner had offered at the goldsmith's were now produced in the court; and the moment his master saw the goblet of silver, he declared it to be one

of those taken from the cabinet, "And this broach," said he, "is mine; I will swear it on the bible-book; but where is the beaker, the tankard, and the cup?" When looking earnestly at the hostler, he shook his head, and went on:—"Oh Eustace! how could you serve your master and your dame so foully; as God is my judge, we have been as good as a father and a mother to you." Eustace was silent, nor would he answer the magistrates. The torture was, therefore, brought forward; and, as the officers of justice were preparing to put him to the question, he thought proper to speak, and requested to be released from their hands, and made the following voluntary confession.

## CHAP. III.

*The Progress of Iniquity; or the Danger of associating with bad Persons, exemplified from the Confession of a Murderer.*

" I AM," said he, " a lost man; for the proofs of my guilt are so manifest, that the falsehoods I have hitherto asserted can no longer answer any good purpose. Heaven help me! I am both a thief and a murderer."—" Go to, Eustace," said his master, " why, you are stark wode; a thief mayhap you be, but not a murderer; for the chevalier is alive." The innkeeper was ordered to be silent, and the culprit proceeded. " About two years ago, there came into our neighbourhood a gay young man, who dressed well, and had

much the air of a person who had been well nurtured. He used frequently to take his morning refreshment at our house; and, pretending to be very fond of horses, he passed much of his time with me, observing how I managed them, and inquiring concerning their qualities and their value. In return for the trouble, as he called it, that he gave me, he constantly made me some small present of money; or, if I best approved it, treated me with liquor. Accursed be the day and the hour, in which I first received his money, or drinked his liquor!

"Our attachment increased daily, insomuch that we were seldom asunder whenever a leisure hour permitted me to join his company.

"One day, he came into the stable to me, while I was rubbing down the horses, and, shewing me a large handful of gold coin, said, with a smile, "Eustace, is it not a pleasant thing to be master of one's time,

to have plenty of money, and to live at one's ease, rather than to rise early, go late to rest, and be at the beck and call of others, to work and slave for them, without the least prospect of bettering one's own condition?" —"No doubt, my good young master," said I, "and you are happy in having such excellent friends to supply you so amply."— "Go to, Eustace," answered he, "you talk like a fool upon these occasions. I have no friends but myself; I am my own friend, and I will be your friend, if you will permit me. Here is an earnest of my regard for you;" and so saying, he thrust into my hand eight or ten pieces of gold. "My brave lad," continued he, "let us befriend ourselves, and the world will respect us. Follow my advice, and we will set the rich at defiance; for we will always secure the power to serve ourselves. Are not riches diffused among the idlest and most unfeeling parts of mankind, in no respect our betters? Do they not live

in the utmost dissipation, riot, and debauchery; and support their crimes by the wealth extracted from the labours of the poor: in return, they hold the labourer in contempt, and monopolize, without remorse, the good things of this world, which ought to be generally divided among the community at large? None ought to be rich, none ought to be poor, but every one should share in the bounties of Providence."

"Perceiving I listened with attention to his harangue, he went on. "Every one, I repeat it, ought to have his share in the common stock of wealth; and, mark me well, when his claim is set aside by the strong hand of unjustifiable oppression, it becomes his duty to seize upon his right, and plunder these who withhold it, I mean the rich, as we would an open and avowed enemy, (for such in fact they are to us,) and supply our own wants, by taking what is due to us, and superfluous to them." In short, I

found that my gay springal was a thief, and I, miserable man! fell into the snare he had prepared for me, and, in an evil hour, became his associate.

"We committed several robberies in the neighbouring forests; but none of them were productive of any extensive booty. However, we conducted ourselves with so much caution, that no one entertained the least suspicion of us. But, alas! the moment I became guilty, my mind was depressed by a thousand fearful imaginations, such as I never experienced before. They pursued me continually, and poisoned all the pleasures I might otherwise have derived from the increase of my income. I looked back with anxiety to the days of innocence, and made unnumbered resolutions to return to the path of rectitude; but in vain: instead of pursuing them with proper resolution, and shunning all converse with my worthless companion, I unbosomed my anxiety to him, who

soon laughed me out of my repentant fits, as he called them, and confirmed me, in defiance of my own conviction, to continue in the road to destruction.

" It occurred to me, that our intimacy (for we were now almost insepatable companions) might be noted, to our mutual disadvantage. I communicated my fears to him upon this subject. He concurred with me, and made his visits less frequent than formerly. Our future meetings usually took place after the family in the inn were retired to rest; for I had the keys of a back gate, which communicated with the stable-yard, and could go in and out at pleasure, without occasioning the least disturbance. My companion was equally conveniently situated, having taken up his residence at a widow woman's, in a lone house upon the borders of the forest, and not above a quarter of a mile from the inn. He had constantly a master key in his pocket, and could command access to his chamber

at all times, in which he had contrived to make a secret closet, where we deposited such parts of our depredations as were proper to be concealed.

"About six, or perhaps eight months back, I called, as usual, at his residence, and was informed by the old lady, that he had not been at home the whole of the day. I repeated my enquiry the succeeding evening, and received the same answer, and more than three weeks elapsed without my seeing or hearing from him, so that I gave up all expectation of his returning. He is, thought I, fallen into the hands of justice; and am not I dependent upon his mercy. I began, therefore, to reflect seriously upon my situation. Sometimes I determined to fly the country; and then, again, I conceived, that it would answer no good purpose for him to betray me. However, at all events, I determined to reform my life, and content myself with the rewards of honesty.

I was one day in the stable, fully occupied with these thoughts, and I fell upon my knees to supplicate the assistance and forgiveness of my Creator; and while I was in the midst of my devotion, the gay seducer entered suddenly, before I could rise or suppress the sorrows of my heart. He perceived my embarrassment, and bursting into a loud laugh, he clapped his hand upon my shoulder, saying, " Have I caught you, coward, whining and puling like a girl that is mother-sick. In the name of the great devil, are you a man fit to be employed in great undertakings? for shame, Eustace! Well then," continued he, finding I made him no answer, but stood with my eyes fixed upon the ground, " return to your sneaking honesty, and be a slave for life, equal the beast you rub down in drudgery; and when old age prevents the exertions of labour, learn, like them, to live hard, and end a life of misery in the next ditch you come to."—" What would you

have me do?" cried I. "Do!" returned he hastily; "die like a dog; for you are content to live like a mean, heartless, despicable, reptile. The devil fetch me, but I thought better things of you."—"My conscience," said I, "accuses me, and I am fearful."—"Indeed!" retorted he, interrupting me, "a thief, and talk of conscience, forsooth: for shame! be a man. Summon your resolution to your aid; none but fools and children are frightened by shadows. Let's have no more of conscience. But, look here, I am not returned empty handed; here is conscience enough to make us merry for two twelvemonths I trow." So saying, he pulled from his gipsire a large purse full of gold, and taking thence as many pieces as he could well grasp in his hand, he put them into mine, swearing at the same time, that I was a whining fool. "Take these," added he, "and enjoy yourself as you ought to do. When these are gone, the forest will furnish us with

more." What shall I say! the sight of my companion, returned so unexpectedly, and the golden harvest he presented to my eyes, overpowered my virtuous resolutions; and his upbraidings made me ashamed of the humble posture in which he found me. I engaged again with him in his nefarious practices, and, by degrees, my mind became callous to all sense of honour or remorse.

"He had frequently proposed to me to quit my master, and live, like him, in perfect freedom, which might readily be done by retiring to some distant part of the country, where our persons and connections were altogether unknown; "and, as your master," said he, "is certainly much indebted to you for a long and faithful service, it is just, on your part, that you should pay yourself, by taking with you his plate, and such valuable articles as can be easily carried away."

"I did not approve of this proposal; it appeared to be replete with danger, and I

had not courage enough to act the villain so openly as to fix the guilt upon myself, and place my sole dependence upon my flight from justice. For this reason, I resisted his solicitations, and waited for some convenient time, when the robbery might be carried into execution with more apparent safety.

"This opportunity occurred soon afterwards, and at a moment when we little expected it: for, on the evening in which it was committed, my partner and I had agreed to make an excursion in the forest; for which purpose, I had got my business done at an early hour, and obtained leave of absence for the night, under the pretence of visiting a relation at a neighbouring village.

"My comrade joined me in the afternoon, and, at the instant we were setting out, the rain, with the thunder and the lightning, came on so suddenly and so violently, that it prevented our journey.

"While we were discoursing together, this chevalier and his sister came into the yard. I took their horses, and concluded, from the richness of their habits, that they were persons of consequence. I also observed the gentleman was particularly anxious for the safety of his mail, which was fastened with strong straps and buckles to his saddle-bow; whence I naturally concluded, that its contents were very valuable. My companion was perfectly of the same opinion; and our determination was formed, without the least hesitation, to get it into our possession.

"I kept close watch in the house to learn what was going forward, and where the guests were to be lodged, without appearing to have the least degree of curiosity, when I found that the red room was appropriate to the use of the young gentleman, who, I made no doubt, would keep the mail in his own care; and in this room, I well knew, was deposited the cabinet which contain-

ed my master's plate, and other articles of value.

" When I communicated this intelligence to my comrade, his countenance brightened with joy, and he exclaimed, " By the devil and his dam, we we are made men! Gold! Eustace, resist no longer; we will empty that cabinet of its precious contents: and by a masterpiece of contrivance, throw all the suspicion of the robbery upon the chevalier."— " Impossible," cried I.—" By the blood," quoth he, " thou art but a dotterel, friend Eustace; the matter is not so difficult as you suppose it to be. The success of the enterprise depends upon one circumstance only, and that is, the drawing back of the bolt belonging to the door of the chamber wherein the chevalier is to sleep. Devise that, and leave the rest to me."

" It occurred to me, that this might be executed by removing part of the pannel of the door, over which the bolt passed; but

the difficulty was to effect this without being noticed. However, while my master, with my mistress and the servants were occupied in the kitchen preparing the supper, and warming the bed-furniture, I took the opportunity of examining the door; and to my great mortification found that the bolt slipped upon a broad plate of iron, to which it was strongly attached, and this plate was too thick to be sawn through, without taking up much more time than the circumstances would allow, and making so much noise as must inevitably have occasioned a discovery.

"I was upon the point of giving up the undertaking, when, passing my hand by accident over the door-post, I found a stone loose in the wall, beneath the arras, which being removed, I could easily thrust my arm through the aperture, and slip the bolt back without any difficulty. Rejoiced at this discovery, I replaced the stone, and drew down the arras over it as it had been before, and

hastened to acquaint my friend with my success.

"We now waited anxiously for the time when we were to carry our plan into execution. He undertook to perform the robbery, and I was appointed to stand at the top of the stairs to give timely notice in case of an alarm, or assist him, if help should be found necessary.

"As soon as all was quiet in the house, I introduced my comrade, who was provided with a lantern, having a light in the front only, and even that he could cover, if occasion required. We ascended cautiously to the chevalier's chamber. I took my station according to his direction, and he, having slipped back the bolt, entered the room, where he remained a considerable time without any kind of alarm being given. It was a tremendous night, the lightning flashed incessantly, and ever and anon the thunder shook the house. Hardened as I was in im-

piety, I trembled, and was several times inclined to abandon my situation, raise the house, and throw myself into the arms of justice, when I heard a violent scuffle in the chevalier's chamber, the cry of murder, and a call for assistance. I rushed in, when, by the light of the lantern, I saw my comrade upon the floor struggling with the chevalier, who held him down. I instantly struck the young gentleman upon the head with my gisarme, when he uttered a groan, and fell apparently lifeless at my feet.—

"Spare me, my brother," cried Emma, casting her eyes upon him bathed in tears: "In mercy pass over the horrors of that fearful night; it is impossible for me to endure the recital."

"My dearest sister," said St Clere, embracing and kissing her, "my tale is drawing apace to the conclusion; for myself, my sufferings were now at an end, for I was insensible to all that followed."

"The robber continued his recital in this manner:—Finding that the people of the house were not alarmed by the outcries which had been made, we put the plate and jewels we found in the cabinet, together with the mail belonging to the young chevalier, into a wallet we had prepared for the purpose, and conveyed them quietly into the stable; whence we returned, and having wrapped the body of the chevalier in his mantle, we carried that also into the stable, leaving the room door open, and the things about it discomposed as they were.

Before day-break the storm began to subside, when we saddled the young gentleman's horse, on which we laid his body and the wallet with the treasure we had acquired. We proceeded instantly to his residence, where we hastily examined our booty, and found it exceeded our most sanguine expectations. It was then agreed that I should instantly return home, and get to bed before

any one was up in the house, and there to await the alarm being given. I was perfectly successful; and in the morning, when called from my bed, came down and joined the outcry, no one having the least suspicion that I had quitted my chamber before, or that I was in the most distant manner implicated in the robbery.

"In the mean time, my comrade had undertaken to carry the dead body, for such we supposed it to be, into the deep recesses of the wood, to bury it there, and then to ride to some distance with the horse, which he would either sell, or make away with, as it should best appear to suit his purpose. What passed at the inn, in consequence of the robbery, does not concern my fate, and, therefore, I shall omit to mention it. Three days passed after the commission of this deed of darkness, and I saw nothing of my partner, so that I really concluded he had played me foul. In this, however, I did him wrong;

for, on the fourth, he came to me, and made me acquainted with the reasons for his absence.

"The moment we parted, he took the horse, with the body of the young chevalier, into the wood, and was seeking out a place proper to hide it, but was interrupted by the trampling of horses, which seemed not to be at any great distance. It was necessary, therefore, for him to leave the body, partly covered with leaves, in a dell near the path side; but he did not quit it without giving it several stabs with his dagger, which I blamed him for, because I thought it was a wanton cruelty. He then mounted the horse, and rode farther into the forest, in order to avoid discovery from the company, which he supposed to be approaching, and returned privately to his own residence, leaving the horse in a thicket, far removed from any beaten path. Towards the evening he took a spade in his hand, and went to the spot where he had de-

…ted the body of the chevalier, designin[g] po… to bury it; but, to his great surprise, the body was gone. This event alarmed him so much, that he dared not return to his lodging, or come to me; but, hastening to the thicket where he had left the horse, jumped into the saddle, and made the best of his way towards Amiens. On the borders of the forest he recollected there was a deep pit, and fearing the horse should be known in the town, he killed him upon the brink of this pit, and cast him into it. He then proceeded to Amiens on foot, where he passed the night at an obscure house of public entertainment, where several vague reports respecting the robbery were bandied about among the travellers who baited there; but nothing transpired that could be depended upon. He left Amiens early the next morning, and wandering about from village to village in the neighbourhood, till he at last obtained full information of what had passed at the inn,

and, finding that no suspicion had fallen up on him or me, he returned on the fourth day, as I have stated, and we congratulated each other upon the success of our enterprise, and the next day was proposed for the division of the booty.

"I accordingly met him at his chamber, where he had placed part of the spoils in two parcels, exceedingly unequal to each other in point of value, and the jewels were set aside by themselves. He then made a long harangue, in which he attributed the contrivance and success of the robbery to himself, and, therefore, he claimed the privilege of making the first choice. Perceiving that I did not appear to be well satisfied with the allotment of the parcels, he boasted much of his honesty: "I had," said he, "the whole in my power, and might have made myself master of it all; but my wish is to act uprightly with a man I esteem as my friend." I then took the portion set apart

me, and said nothing in return; when he proceeded: "These jewels we have been much deceived in. They are made up merely for show; the stones are counterfeit, and the gold adulterated; to which I may add, the hazard of disposing of them is so manifest, that they are not worth contending about. Now, I will give you ten pounds in crowns for your share of these trinkets, though, by all that's sacred, I do not believe I ever shall return the money! but I do this, because you do not seem perfectly satisfied with your parcel of the plate, and to convince you of my fair dealing." I was ready to burst with indignation at the proposal; but, as I had determined to be even with him, I assumed an air of cheerfulness, and acquiesced without starting the least shadow of objection. On his part he seemed highly delighted with my docility.

"Having thus finished our business, he took me by the hand, saying, "My dear friend, we must part; it is no longer proper

for us to be seen together. This transaction is of too much magnitude to remain without further investigation. The gisarme, which unfortunately we left behind us, was mine; and, though I do not think it can be traced to me, it is a circumstance that does not please me;—but the removal of the body has so much of mystery in it, that I cannot help being alarmed. If you resolve to stay where you are, (and, indeed, I do not see that you have equal reason to depart immediately,) it will be rather advantageous than hurtful to you that I should disappear." I agreed with him, but, at the same time, expressed my ardent wish to know in what part of the world he designed to take up his residence. To this he answered, "It is impossible to speak positively to that question; for men like us, who depend upon good fortune only, are subject to many casualties, more than the rest of mankind. I have, however, already discharged my lodging; early in the morn-

[illegible] I mean to make my departure; and, i[illegible] to escape the notice of the villagers, I shall assume the disguise of a pedlar. I shall traverse the lower part of the forest, and make the best of my way to Laundrecy, where I probably may lighten my pack, by disposing of part of my trinkets. I shall thence proceed by a circuitous rout to Paris, whither, if you should be inclined to follow me, we may again lay our heads together to our mutual advantage."

"We then took leave of each other, and I returned home, disgusted with the villainous dissimulation of my comrade. My first care was to secure the part of the booty which had been allotted to me, and I hid it in a hole I had made for that purpose in the ground, beneath a large corn chest in the stable. I now determined to sacrifice my comrade to my vengeance, and make myself master of all his riches; and, in order that I might have a fair pretext for my absence, I

turned a new purchased horse into the road adrift over night, pretending it had broken from the pasture, and went out early in the morning to seek after it.

"I may here observe, that I am tolerably expert in the management of the cross-bow, and had a good one of my own, which I frequently used to destroy the vermin, and this I concealed under my cloak, with half-a-dozen quarrels headed with iron.

"Thus armed, I went to the wood before day-break, and concealed myself in a thicket adjoining to the path which led to Laundrecy. In less than two hours, he came disguised, as he said he should be, with a large pack strapped over his shoulders. As he passed me, I took a sure aim, and shot him through the body. He fell instantly to the ground, and lay groaning in the agonies of death. When I came up to him, he cast his eyes upon me, and seeing the bow in my hand, was certain that he owed his death's

wound to me, when raising himself upon one arm, "Is it possible!" he cried, "is it possible that thou shouldest be my murderer! Justice, in truth, requires my life, but even justice claimed it not from thee!" "What," said I, "hast thou to do with justice, thou who first made me a thief, and then robbed me of the wages due to my iniquity!" "I dare not appeal to Heaven," quoth he, "for heaven hears not wretches so wicked as we are. The vengeance of hell has overtaken me, and I die without hope, encumbered with all my foul doings! May the curses of hell follow thee, thou villain! May you suffer under the hands of a lingering executioner, and die amidst the execrations and hootings of mankind, a shame to devils who hold faith with each other! and may you be hated for ever by all the fearful spirits who inhabit the regions of the damned!" and with these horrid imprecations, he breathed forth his soul.

Here he seemed much agitated, and paused awhile; but recovering himself in a few minutes, he went on.—"I dragged the body into a dell, and covered it for the present with leaves, and such rubbish as I could find at hand: the pack with the treasure I hid in another place, and returned home, pretending that I had searched every where that I could think of for the horse, but without success. In the dusk of the evening, I went again to the forest, buried the body, to prevent its being found, and brought the pack unnoticed to the stable. I remained with my master some time after the departure of the young lady, but not without continual uneasiness, expecting every moment that something would happen to bring me to justice; besides my riches were of no service to me there, for I dared not offer any of the spoils to sale, for fear of detection. I therefore determined to remove; and the better to avoid suspicion, I assured my master, I had

received letters from the friends of a distant relation, who was lately dead, and had left me a considerable legacy; and that the forms of the law required my presence; accordingly we settled our account; he paid me what wages were due to me, and we parted on terms of friendship."

Here the innkeeper fetched a deep sigh, and shook his head; the prisoner then hesitated a moment, and then went on.—"I had packed up my treasure, and removed it to a secret place in the wood the evening before my departure. I purchased a strong horse, in order to travel with more expedition. I went to Paris, where I resided several days: here I spent in idleness and dissipation a large portion of my wealth, and probably should soon have beggared myself, had not an unsuccessful attempt I made to cut the purse of a young lady of quality, occasioned me to make a quicker retreat from that city, than I at first intended. I have since that time experi-

enced several changes of fortune, and it is now two days back since I arrived in this city, where I intended to have disposed of the remaining part of those treasures I obtained by my villainy. And here, as you see, offended justice has overtaken me. The chaplet is in truth the property of the chevalier, the plate is part of what belonged to my master, the broach is his, and the carcanet I found among the spoils belonging to my comrade."

Here he ended; and, to this confession, which was taken down in writing by the clerks of the court, he signed the cross in witness of the truth. His condemnation was, that his limbs should be broken, and his body, still living, exposed upon a wheel, there to die a dreadful and lingering death.—" But," continued Saint Clere, " at my intercession with the regent, the cruelty was remitted, and the wretched culprit was hanged without any previous torment being practised upon him. Thus through the disposition of Pro-

evidence, the chaplet was made the instrument of detecting a robber and a murderer, and once more returned to my possession."

"It is a very singular and a very interesting incident," said Lord Boteler; "but before you resume the thread of your history, my dear Saint Clere, permit me to make one observation." Saint Clere bowed, and the baron went on:—"I cannot well account for the proceeding of the robber, when he first entered your chamber. One would naturally have thought, that his first attack would have been upon you, rather than upon the cabinet, and especially as he believed you was in a very sound sleep."

"The same observation, my lord, occurred to me," said Saint Clere; "and previous to the execution of the criminal, I questioned him respecting that transaction; and he knowing that the remittance of the torture had been made at my request, very readily made me the following reply:"—"You may recollect that I told you my com-

rade, previous to the robbery, would, by a *master-piece of contrivance*, turn the suspicion of the guilt upon you. Now this very procedure, which seems so strange to you, formed a material part of his plan. "If," said he, "I shall be fortunate enough to catch the chevalier asleep, and can rifle the cabinet without disturbing him, we cannot fail of success. For having got the plate, together with his mail, into our possession, we will convey it to the foot of the stairs before we attempt to seize his person: our attack shall then be made upon him with united energy; and our first business must be to thrust a gag into his mouth to prevent his outcries: we will then bind him hand and foot, and convey him upon his own horse into the wood, where we will murder and bury him, and then dispose of the horse as occasion may require. If, on the other hand, he should in the struggle make such an alarm as to waken the people of the house, we will then put out the light,

and I will carry off the booty, while you may slink to your bed before the assistance can reach him, and then it will pass for a robbery by the foreign banditti. The design, it is true, did not succeed as he had planned it: and had your cries been heard, our safety would have depended upon a precipitate retreat, without a possibility of our effecting the robbery. If you wish to know the reason why we resolved to take you so far away before we put you to death, the answer is plain; because we were well aware that the bed clothes being stained with your blood, would be considered as a proof that you had been murdered. But our design was to counteract that idea, and fix the suspicion upon you of having committed the depredation, and made your escape. Yet after all our caution, we did not recollect, that the blood which flowed from your wound remained upon the floor, nor that we had left the gisarme behind us in the chamber; so far through

haste we failed in the execution of our plan. These circumstances rendered, it is true, the adventure more mysterious; but, as it happened, they afforded no light for the detection of the authors."

"Having no further question to ask, our conversation finished here. And his confessor entering the cell at the same time, I left him to the admonitions of the holy father, heartily supplicating forgiveness for him from the God of mercy."

## CHAP. III.

*Lord Henry returns to England, and becomes a favourite at the Court.—The warmth of his temper displayed in a Dialogue between him and the Baron Saint Clere at Gay Bowers. —His Adventures concluded.*

"The investigation of this horrid transaction, rendered it necessary for me to make known to my patron, the Duke of York, that I was really the son of Lord Darcy, and had assumed the name of my mother's family, on account of the disgrace which had befallen my father. His Excellency promised to me his interest at the court to obtain a reversement of the decree of outlawry, and put me in possession of the estates, which, by right of

inheritance, had belonged to the Darcies; and this promise he faithfully performed. "You are anxious," said he, "I doubt not, to return to your native country; and indeed it is proper that you should, for your presence may perchance be necessary. Go, therefore, and use all expedition; I shall charge you with letters of consequence to the king, and must desire you to deliver them to him as soon as possible." I assured him, I would exert my utmost diligence. At a late hour, the letters were put into my hands; and, early in the morning, I and my retinue, being provided with excellent horses, made the best of our way to Calais, passing the sea to Dover. We hired fresh horses, and, without stopping to sleep upon the road, proceeded to Windsor, where our gracious Sovereign then held his court. Having obtained admission to the royal presence, I delivered my letters; and when his Majesty had perused them, he said to me, "Your com-

mander has spoken very warmly in your commendation, and, so far as I may judge from your diligence in the speedy delivery of these letters, you deserve his praises. Do not absent yourself from the court; for it is my desire to speak farther with you at some more convenient opportunity."

"The moment I was at leisure, I wrote to my uncle at Gay Bowers, (for I was not yet acquainted with his death,) informing him of my arrival in England, and intention of paying him a visit in a short time. I also addressed a letter to you, my dear Emma, not doubting but you was there.

"The next day the king favoured me with a second interview. He questioned me concerning many things respecting the war, and seemed to be perfectly satisfied with my answers. He again told me, that the Duke of York had recommended me to his favour; "and I am resolved," said he, "to do something for you." In short, I had the honour

of conversing with his majesty several days, when one morning taking me into his closet as usual, he put two small rolls of parchment into my hands; "One of these," said he, "is the reversion of a decree of outlawry passed upon your father, and the other is a deed for the restoration of the Darcy estates to you his heir. I would have you," continued he, "go directly into Essex, and take possession of your patrimony. You will find all things there accommodated for your reception." I fell upon my knees to thank him for his goodness, but he commanded me to rise, and said, with a gracious smile, "If the manners of the court are not unpleasing to you, return as soon as convenient; I shall be glad to see you near me." What kindness, my dearest Emma, what condescension, from a mighty monarch!

"I joyfully obeyed the mandate of my sovereign, and the moment the horses could be made ready for me and my retinue, I de-

parted from Windsor, and, passing through London, reached Billericay, where I slept that night."

The Lady Emma turned away her head at the mention of the word Billericay, and wiped away the tears that involuntarily started from her eyes, which her brother observed, and paused for a moment; but having nothing further to say respecting that place, he went on:—

"Early in the morning I proceeded towards Gay Bowers, and reached Danbury by nine o'clock. I stopped at a little inn, a small distance from the church, to bait the horses, and afford my servants some leisure for refreshment; and here I first learned that my uncle had been dead several years; and that he was succeeded in his titles and estates by his son Gaston, "Who," says the innkeeper, "if I dare speak out, I should say, does not inherit the virtues of his father; but lives alone, as it were, and starves him-

self in the midst of plenty." This unfavourable account of my cousin's disposition made me resolve to leave my attendants at the inn, and, as his residence was at no great distance, to visit him alone, for surely, said I to myself, he will think I am bringing a regiment of soldiers to quarter upon him, and this may make him out of temper with me.

"I found him in the midst of a large and noble ruin of a mansion, which had for ages been supported by the family of the Saint Cleres with splendour; but which now was tumbling about its miserable owner's ears. I made myself known to him, and was received with such a petrifying coolness, as might well have offended one who had not the least claim upon his generosity. Surely, thought I, this wretched being thinks that I am come to solicit his charity. The first compliments, which in truth deserved no such appellation, were no sooner passed between

us, than I enquired for my Emma, and requested to see her. He cast his eyes upon the ground, and shook his head, but returned me no answer. I repeated the question with some degree of impatience, and desired that she might be called immediately. He then began a tedious oration, interrupted by frequent pauses, and obscured by continual allusions to events that I was altogether unacquainted with. I heard, however, that, some months back, a person, calling herself the daughter of Lord Darcy, had imposed herself upon him; that he had received her with great kindness; that she had repayed his benevolence with the basest ingratitude, and deported herself with so little decorum, that it was impossible for him to endure it; his remonstrances, which he had urged with so much tenderness and affection, were of no effect; she admitted the addresses of a dissolute young springal, who probably had followed her to Danbury, and at last disappear-

ed with him, but not without robbing him, her benefactor, of a considerable sum of money. "I hope, and trust," continued he, "this lewd woman was some impostor. If she be really our relation, she has debased the blood of two noble families." I had not patience to hear him any farther; his story was inconsistent with reason. I rose suddenly from my seat, and, smiting my hand violently upon the table, exclaimed:—"You lie, unnurtured Gaston; you lie, like a villain: and did not the noble blood of your ancestors flow in your veins, I would make you eat this dagger, hilt and all, or recant your blasphemous falsehoods. Oh my Emma! You debase the blood of the Darcies! You tarnish the glory of the family of the Saint Cleres! Heaven grant me forbearance! If you have mistreated, as I suspect you have, this dear relation, I will take ample vengeance for her wrongs. I will, by my hope of Heaven's joys hereafter!"—"What!" cried

he, starting back affrighted, and trembling, "dost thou come to threaten me in my own house; to murder me upon my own hearth!" —"No! perfidious Gaston," said I, thrusting my dagger into the sheath, which I had half drawn out, "your life is safe enough: I will not make bare my weapon upon a trembling coward; but for thy tale of slander---Gracious Heaven! shall she, so highly-born, so nurtured, so sensible of what is due to female-honour, fall from the paths of rectitude at once, and plunge into the gulf of infamy! By the soul of my father, it is false; it is a damned lie!"—"You called me unnurtured," said he, in a tremulous tone of voice, "and truly I know but little of the gay and dissipated part of the world. My manners are homely enough; but such as they are, they serve me well: and tell me, fine sir, what shall I say of yours, who intrude yourself, unasked, upon me, overwhelm me with a torrent of abuse in my own house, and give me the lie to my

beard? Such manners ill become a gentleman; such manners would disgrace a plebeian. I would the tale were false, I would that the glory of the Saint Cleres were not tarnished; but I have a witness. It is fit you should first hear, and then, perchance, you may moderate your high tone: if not, I must tell you, I care not how much you shorten your unwelcome visit."

"To this invective, I returned no answer; and he rung the bell, which stood before him upon the table, when an elderly woman entered the parlour, to whom he addressed himself, and commanded her to satisfy me respecting the behaviour of the young lady, who had resided there some time back, and pretended to be nearly related to him. She obeyed, prefacing her discourse with a long account of his benevolence and forbearance to that naughty damsel, as she was pleased to call her. This was followed by a detail of her ungrateful behaviour in return for the fa-

vours she had received; she then informed me that the night previous to the departure of the lady, she had seen in her possession a large purse of gold, which she had endeavoured in vain to conceal; but finding she could not, declared it was given her by the baron. "The next morning," added the woman, "I waited upon her to call her to breakfast; but she was not to be found. When I entered the chamber, I saw that part of the bed-clothes were taken from the bed, and, going to the window, I discovered the sheets tied together, and made fast to the iron bar belonging to the casement. It then occurred to me, that she had made her escape in the night; and, recollecting the money I had seen in her possession, I hastened to my lord, and, with tears in my eyes, informed him of the lady's departure, and my fears that she had robbed him, which indeed I found were true. I have since learned," continued the old woman, "that the naughty lady was

seen passing through Danbury early in the morning, in company with"—"Hold," said I, "there is certainly some inexplicable mystery in this transaction." I then desired the woman to give me a description of the lady; and, without the least hesitation, she described the person of my dear Emma so minutely and so accurately, that I was struck with astonishment.

"Gaston, seeing my agitation, desired the woman to withdraw, and resumed his speech to this effect:—"You see, I have not deceived you; I have been the sufferer in this business; and let me tell you, cousin, you might have spared much of the harsh language that has passed, had you possessed patience enough to have waited for a proper investigation of the fact."—"You say," returned I, "that she has robbed you; the accusation militates against reason: she could have had no incentive to commit so foul a fact. The monies due to her;---her mother's jointure,

and the estates to which she is heiress, must have afforded her an ample supply; and of these no man knows the value better than you."—"What talk you," said he, "of monies due, of jointures, and estates? You are not, it seems, aware how much your father's affairs were embarrassed."—"I cannot be ignorant of that," answered I hastily; "but I know also, with equal certainty, that, if they have been managed with the same justice by you, that they were in my honoured uncle's life-time, the incumbrances are nearly, or altogether, done away."—"Yes," retorted he, with a sarcastic grin, "and so your sister said, and made large claims; but God help me, I have not the property in hand to answer them; and, believe me, my cousin, you will find yourself mistaken. The whole of your patrimony has been mortgaged for larger sums than it now is valued at, and the interest has accumulated beyond all due proportion. Money was also necessary for the repairs,

which my father paid from time to time, without obtaining any sett-off; because the draughts for cash from his brother were so large, and his importunities so pressing. Since my father's death, I have been obliged to submit to the foreclosure of the mortgage upon your mother's jointure, or I should have been ruined by his generosity."—"Ruined!" cried I; "you speak of things impossible. Exclusive of the jointure and the family estates which are sequestered to the crown, my father had made several private purchases, which were given over to my uncle in trust, for my dear Emma and myself. What is become of them?"—"Why, there it is," continued he, "gadsfish, I do not seek my own advantage, but as justice allows me fairly, they are sold." —"Without our concurrence?" said I, "that cannot be." He answered:—"Therein you mistake. We had full power of sale; and I was obliged to exert that power, or be myself a beggar. In such case, I trow, neither

you, nor your *dear sister*, would have supported me."—"I cannot comprehend you," said I, "be more explicit, I beseech you, if you expect me to be patient."—"Go to, now," quoth he, "you are so violent, there is no reasoning with you; your sister was the same. I received her affectionately, and welcomed her to my humble dwelling, and to my humble fire; for I am obliged to suit my expences to my income, and submit to hard living in order to live out of debt."—"Well, and what then?" cried I, hastily.—"What then!" answered he; "Why, then, I wish every one would do the same. But, truly, I have found my slender board is ill suited to high stomachs. My economy is condemned, my person slighted, and my advice laughed at."—"And who condemns your economy, who slights your person, who laughs at your advice?" said I.—"And is it handsome," answered he, "to hear one's words repeated, parrot-like. Go to, I will shew you the mort-

gages I spake of, and the deeds of sale you doubt the truth of, and you shall be convinced. Your own eyes shall convince you, that I have been your friend, and a friend to your family. Your warmth of temper I am willing to overlook, it is a family failing. Your father possessed the same; but, unfortunately for you all, it was his ruin."—"Spare your comments, Gaston," said I, "and speak to the point."—"Then, to the point I will speak," quoth he; "and the point is this:—You stand indebted to me two thousand crowns; (seeing I was much agitated, he went on.) I have stated it at the lowest calculation, and am willing to acquit you of the whole. And, gads my life, if you will but hear me, for your mother, my aunt's sake, I am inclined to go forward as your friend, and lend you a trifle; for unfortunately for me, it is but a trifle that I can spare. I would advise you to go abroad, and serve your king and your country, as a man of courage

ought to do; for I perceive you to be a man of courage, and what better road to fortune and preferment can be chosen by a gentleman of reduced circumstances, than that of a soldier, setting aside the glory that valour may acquire. In this case, I say, I will lend you sufficient to purchase you an ancientship, and so set open the door to future wealth and honour."

"I could hear him no further, and though I had several other important questions to put to him, this last insult provoked me beyond endurance. "'Fore Heaven," cried I, "thou art a wretch without a mind, a vile, a miserable reptile. As God's my judge, I am to blame to hold converse with thee. But I will find my persecuted sister. Wronged as she is, she shall confront thee to thy confusion. And for these deeds, these mortgages, they shall be examined, by those who will make thee tremble worse than I have done. I am not without friends, and powerful ones,

and, if I were, thou pitiful disgrace to the name of manhood! I would not apply to such a thing as thou art for assistance." So saying, I cast my mantle over my shoulders, and, without waiting for his reply, hurried away, as though I had been flying from an infection, I mounted my horse, which I had left in the outer court, and rode back to the inn.

"Thus, my lord," added Saint Clere, addressing himself to the baron, "I have given you the substance of what passed at the interview between Gaston and myself. I am well aware, that the impetuosity of my temper laid me open to the censures of my cousin; but I must have been as inanimate as a statue of marble to have heard, unmoved, such vile and inconsistent accusations brought forward against my dearest relative."

"I see no need of apology, my good friend," said Lord Boteler, "falsehood and

duplicity ought to be treated with contempt. I beseech you continue your history."

Saint Clere bowed his head, and went on: —"While my servants were preparing for our departure, I entered a second time into conversation with the host at the Griffin, for that was the sign of the inn where we stopped, and I questioned him respecting a young lady, who had been at Gay Bowers, some months back; and what reports were circulated concerning her. He replied, "That he knew but very little of the matter; a young lady certainly was there, who passed for a relation of the baron's, exceedingly beautiful, and amiable in her deportment when she appeared in public; but said to be very loose and dissipated in her private manners. After she had resided at Gay Bowers some short time, she departed thence clandestinely, and, according to report, took with her more than properly belonged to her. I saw her pass my

door, on the morning she made her escape; and, as God shall judge me, she looked more like an angel, than like a bad woman."—"Did she seem to be elevated with joy, or depressed with sorrow?" said I.—"Like one," quoth the host, "forsaken of her friends; for her veil blowing aside, as she went by, discovered the sweetest face I ever saw; and her eyes were full of tears, and her looks so modest and innocent, that I cannot help thinking she has been falsely accused."—"But the young fellow who was with her?" —"Indeed, good sir," quoth he, "I saw no one with her. His lordship's steward circulated that report; but, by the holy-rood, I do not believe it."—"No doubt, it was false," said I, "and so, I trust, was all the rest; but tell me, I pray you, which way did she go?" —"Towards Sandon," added he; "but I was told by one, who passed her upon Elmgreen, that she enquired from him the readiest way to Chelmsford, and since that time I have

not heard of her."—"Holy saints!" cried I, in an agony of grief, "where was then your protecting power? Forsaken innocent, you must be found!"

"The host, alarmed at my ejaculation, started back, and said, "You know her, then?"—"Yes," said I; "and do you think you should remember her again?"—"I am certain," replied he, "I should."—"Then," said I, "go you instantly to Chelmsford, use every diligence to enquire her out, and, if you should be successful, tell her her troubles are at an end; for at Foleshunt Darcy she may find her brother."—"Her brother, sir!" said the host.—"Her dear, her affectionate brother," said I; and at the same time put a purse of gold into his hands, adding, "spare no expence, and two of my servants shall go with you, and give you every necessary assistance."

"The host promised faithfully to perform his commission. I caused two of my retinue

to remain behind me, and, pleasing myself with the hope that her residence might be traced out, I set forward towards Maldon, and, passing through that town, came to the mansion of the Darcies early in the afternoon.

"The next day, according to the king's orders, a court was held by the justiciaries for the county, and I was reinstated in the honours and emoluments which had formerly belonged to our family.

"The news of my good fortune was presently known at Gay Bowers; and Gaston, well assured, that I would use the utmost of my power to develope his villainous proceedings, endeavoured, by a change of conduct, as mean and servile, as his former deportment had been sarcastic and overbearing, to disarm my vengeance, and sent me a conciliatory epistle, couched in the following terms:—

" DEAR COUSIN,

" I take the earliest opportunity to congratulate you upon your successful resumption of the family-estates and residence, to which you are in justice the true-heir; and, believe me, no one rejoices more than I do, at hearing of your welfare. I cannot mention, without feeling the most poignant regret, the unfortunate misunderstanding which took place between us, when you did me the honour of visiting me at Gay Bowers. I shall beg of you to permit me to see you again, at any time you may think proper to appoint for that purpose, when a fair investigation of the papers and proceedings, relative to the monies due upon the several estates committed to my care, shall be laid before you. A little consideration, I doubt not, my dear cousin, will convince you, that a mutual disadvantage must arise to us, by embroiling ourselves in a tedious and an uncertain lawsuit. On my own part, I wish for justice only.

I find, on a review of the papers, that some mistatements have been made; but those I am ready to rectify, and, I trust, to your satisfaction. I have also reason to believe, that the misconduct of the lady, your sister, has been exaggerated. I have been deceived, and shall think it my duty to make every amends that are within my power. From your most affectionate cousin,

GASTON SAINT CLERE."

"This letter was delivered to me while I sat at table with the court officers. I cast my eyes over it, and, when I saw from whom it came, I gave it to my secretary for him to copy it; and when dinner was over, I caused it to be refolded, and gave it again into the hands of the messenger, desiring him to inform his master, that I would employ a person proper for the purpose to answer that letter.

"The servants I had sent with the inn-

keeper from Danbury to Chelmsford, followed me to Foleshunt Darcy two days after. They assured me, that every possible enquiry had been made after the lady described by the innkeeper; but to no purpose. She was seen at Sandon and at Chelmsford the same day; but they were not able to trace their information any further.

"This unwelcome intelligence prevented my staying any longer at Foleshunt Darcy; for I had no enjoyment of my new acquirements, without the participation of my Emma. I therefore resolved to seek for her among all the friends and distant relations of both our families, wherever I could find them, in hopes she might have sought an asylum with some one of them; but my researches were in vain, and continual disappointments made me completely miserable. I began to suspect, that Gaston had been wicked enough to add murder to his other atrocities, and was resolved to cite him to

trial, upon an indictment for that crime; but the judge-advocate advised me to be very circumspect in preferring a charge of that kind against a peer, except upon very certain grounds; because I might thereby incur the censure of the court, and subject myself to much inconveniency. I have, however, proceeded against him for the recovery of our property, and cast him in several expensive suits.

"The cause respecting our mother's jointure is upon the eve of determination; and your presence, my dear Emma, will be of much service. This, as well as those that have preceded it, my counsel assures me cannot fail of being decided in our favour."

Here Lord Darcy bowed to the company, and concluded his narrative. Leaving the audience to their expressions of wonder and congratulation at the change of Saint Clere's fortune, we return to the inferior persons of our story.

## SECTION VIII.

Good eating and drinking, with gentle exercise, in a week or two restored Ralph, not only to his proper senses, but also to his bodily strength. When having attempted a fall with several of his pot companions, for practice' sake, and proved successful, he determined to wreck his vengeance upon the baron's jester. Ralph was not scholar enough to write, but applied to Thomas, the reve's son, to pen a letter for him. Thomas readily undertook the performance, and between them the following epistle was produced:

" Good mister fool, or good mister knave,

or both, as you shall like it,—I Ralph, the tasker, aread you to remember the wileful gibes and lewd japings you cast upon me, when held in durance by the craft of Cuthbert the barber; and hereby I do declare you to be a false faytor, and a recreant lurdane, and defy you to mortal combat. Moreover, I hest you to forsay the love of Margery, my bonnebell, or I'll so tan your scurvy hide, that Sim Glover, her father, shall take it for a jerkin of leather. Answer this in fair guise, or I will rap the handle of my large Sheffield thwittle over your knave's costard, whenever I may meet you."

This letter was superscribed—"To Gregory Jester, the baron's fool."

Thomas took upon him to convey the challenge to Gregory, and delivered it to him, in the presence of the superior domestics, while they were sitting at dinner. Gregory not being able to read it with facility, craved as-

sistance from Thomas; "For certes," said he, "my eyes be somewhat weak; besides, I have no glasses, and here be certain selcouth words, I con not well." He then reached the epistle to Thomas, who, winking to his comrades, read the whole of it aloud, and then addressed himself to the jester, saying, "By the good rood of Daynam, this churl bayeth full loudly, and weens to appall us by his craking; but his doughtyness must be availed; say you not so, friend Gregory."

"Say, indeed," replied the jester, "what should I say to such a jotternol? And wit ye not, the churl is besides his wits? And would you have me hold parley with a madman?"

"Certes, you do him wrong," said Thomas; "his wits are well enough at ease, and the knave is sound wind and limb, which makes him so haughty; but herein, if I misween not, your honour stands at the stake for the

ban-dog to bay at; for honour's sake, ye are bound to answer the challenge."

"By the devil and his dam, I will answer no challenge," cried Gregory, "ween ye that I be wode, or that my wits are shell-bound? Is it befitting for a person of my elevation to take note of such a dunghill weed?"

"Tush man," quoth Thomas, "it will not serve thy turn, at this stound, to cry Craven, sithence it were a shame to us all for this derseignment to be overpassed without reply. How say you, my lusty compeers; shall we permit a hinderlin to sit at board with us, and brand us with the name of cowards?"

"No, Thomas," cried they all; "if the jester refuses to fight, he shall not sit at our board; but let him take his commons with the scullions and turnspits."

"Why brawl ye thus, my masters?" said the

page Gervice, "well did I wot, and oft have told ye the same, he is a lozel knave, doughty only in impudence; for his wit is as edgeless as Sampson's anvil, and can only serve him to frisk and gambol, like a fool, as he is, on a May-day mummery, when he boasts of practising his paces, his galloping, curvettings, trottings, and amblings, with his Canterbury canters, kickings, roarings, and whinings, or prates of holding his tight rein, his loose rein, with his kirbs, and his snaffles, and his bells. I have no patience to hear him, nor with those who encourage such idle fooleries. But now the heartless sot is called upon to demean himself as a man, he is sore aghast, like a chattering pye caught in the trammels."

"Go to, fellow page," said Fabian, "you are too severe upon our joke-cracker; by the lord of Lincoln, I have seen you giggle, and throw your bonnet in the air, for pleasure, at

witnessing his vagaries; and well I ween, Gregory shall not be found to lack lustihood, but will fight, like a dragoon, when occasion calls."

"Why, what a coil ye keep," quoth Gregory, "japing, and bording. Do ye hold me to be such a dolt as to take a Jenny howlet for a Tassel gentle, or to turn your idle merriment into an earnest game?"

"There went the hare away; the fool is wise for once," cried Gervice, "and will save his coxcomb. If he veil not his bonnet, by Paul's bell, the tasker will thrash him into stubble; but well I weened he would not fight."

"How! not fight?" quoth Cecil, the butler, "by the martyr of Kent, if he quell not this carl, I'll pass his horn over, and it shall be filled with the washings of the pottle-pots!"

"He shall fight," said Gilbert, the carver, "or I will brittle his ears for him, and send

him to Jenkin, the bear-ward, to carry garbage to the brutes."

"Why look you," said Parker, the deer-keeper, "by this broad fletch, which has pierced the side of many a fat buck, we will all be on his party; and he shall have a shield, a lance, and armour of proof, with a basinet of steel, and a curtal axe."

"And his brand," said Peretto, the minstrel, "shall be a trusty one, equal to that high *morglay*, with which King Arthur, the mirror of knighthood, and sovereign of the round-table, quelled the dragon in the fens of Essex."

"Stint your clamour," cried Gregory, "for ye were born in a mill, I trow, your clacks be so loud; but the brawling is to no purpose, I wot well, there is nothing soothlike in your areeds."

"By the mass, but you will find them to be full sooth," said Thomas, "and you must fight, or quit our board."

Here he appealed to his comrades, when one and all assured the jester, that there was no alternative. This decision made him quake with fear, and the reve's son, to raise his spirits, represented to him the unskilfulness of his antagonist. "He is a seely carl," said he, "who never wielded a sword, nor bore a shield, nor chopped at a pell, nor broke a lance on a wedding-day, by tilting at a quintain: he is a very flail swinger, and wots not the handling of war weapons; besides we will all be at hand to abet and save you in case of danger."

In short, the jester was so sharply pressed upon by them, that, contrary to his inclination, he was obliged to comply. And, in the first place, it was deemed necessary to return an answer of defiance suitable to the challenge. Thomas was pitched upon as the scribe; and, after some consultation, the following retort was committed to writing:—

"Mister flail swinger, in order to areed your churlship better portaunce, and correct

your diction, when you presume to address your betters, I, Gregory Jester, at this stound will degrade my rank awhile, and condescend to chastise ye at your own requiring: I will send thee back like a base hilding to thy friend Cuthbert, who shall shave thee anew and make thee as tame as Jenkin does his lordship's bears and jackanapes; and sithence you pollute, with vulgar lips, the name of Margery, my dearest leman, and the fairest flower of the prime, I will make thee forego all pretensions to her love, or carven your knave's pelt into flail thongs."

This counter-challenge was addressed to Ralph Everid the cornthrasher; and Thomas undertook to deliver the same to the tasker; "but," said he, "if I can make up this affray withouten blood-shedding."

"Do so," dear Thomas, interrupted the jester, hastily; "for the mercy of the blessed Mary Virgin, do so; ye well wot this brawling is unseemly, and by the young Saint

Hugh of Lincoln, slain by the cursed Jews, I have no mind to deluge the earth with the knave's blood."

"Marry may the holy saints forefend," quoth Thomas, "that human blood should be yshed in wantonness! and no living wight would outstep me to empeach a mortal combat: but ye are well avised; this same tasker is a wilful churl, as choleric as a dragon, and as implacable as a fiend. What wist ye, my comrades; I was told the other day, some eight years back, this carl was in service at East Barnet, and, in a foul bickerment, he slew a stout man, and a bold one, with a single blow of his fist, algates his antagonist was armed with a double-edged glave, and a hand buckler."

"The de-e-e-vil he did," exclaimed Gregory, trembling with affright; "why then you may fight him yourself for me, I will not face such a fire-drake."

"Not face him!" answered Thomas; "but

in sooth you shall, and that eftsoons, for honour's sake. For, wot ye well, the wight he slew, had not the vantage of defensive armour, nor such stout hearts as we, to beteem him from misfare."

"Say no more about it," quoth Parker, "Gregory shall fight; and by my best bugle tipped with silver, I had leever my bow-string should snap in twain, when I point at a fair mark, than our comrade should be yshent, for that would be a disgrace to all serving-men for an age to come."

"Certes all this is very fine talking," said Gregory.

"To be sure, man," replied Peter Lanaset; "if he bates, you shall reclaim him; I warrant the hawk will prove a hagard; fear not, for we be all with you."

"And for my part," said Thomas, "I will wend away, and seek out this swaggering swash buckler."

"But I beseech you," cried Gregory, "by

the holy mass to make us friends. In sooth, I owe the churl no maltalent. In good sooth, I have no grudge at heart against him."

"Certes," answered Thomas, "I would speak him fair, but he is such a wayward churl, and wilful as a mule. Gentle speech, and well beseen courtesy, like crusts to curst cur, would only make him brawl the louder. But my hearts, this is a fair tide; his lordship is from home, and there is nothing to lep us in the way. Gregory, like a tall man, is as choleric as the Prior's bull at Tedbury, and we will have this notable emprise atchieved before sun setting."

The close of this oration was received with a general shout of applause, when Gregory stamped with his foot and vociferated, "Ye are all mad! By the hallowed rood, ye are possessed! The devil himself has gained the mastery over your wits! Thomas, you are a false knave to say I am choleric; I

will not fight this afternoon; I am not in the trim for fighting; nor shall a mother's son among you play his stales on me, nor make me fight till I am choleric."

"Certes then, there is not a mother's son shall make you fight hastily," said Gervise; "for I will gage large odds, you will not be choleric atween this tide and martlemas."

"Have at you, Mister Page," retorted Cecil; "there is my hand, and I will wager a dozen pottles of spiced wine to a silver cross, Gregory shall be eftsoons forthcoming, and shall mow down this roarer like a thistle stem with one flourish of his brand-iron. What, man! I will have him into the pantry, and he shall take a full horn of sound clary, or two, so need it, and make him rageful as a lion; then I read the carl to say his pater-noster, and prepare his sprite for purgatory.

Thomas took this opportunity to slip out of the hall unseen by the jester, who follow-

ed Cecil; and having swallowed a large cup full of wine, began to talk more loudly. Fabian undertook to arm him; but before he was invested with the habiliments of war, he desired to have a few minutes conversation in private with the page, and Cecil to accommodate him, withdrew. "Look you now, Fabian," said he, "here is half an angel of gold, and it shall be thine, so be it, you will do me a service."

"Give me but the coin," cried Fabian, "and conclude the service done; softly and fairly will farthest go."

"I ween, my brave page," quoth the jester, withdrawing his hand, "it is well fitting you should first learn what the service may be. You and I are nearly paregal in size, and, well I wot, ye may pass for me when cased in armour, and have the vizor of your bassinet drawn over your face; now I will give you this piece of gold, to guise yourself, and take in hand this achievement on my behalf.

Certes, you are a doughty man, and apt at the use of arms; so that, without let, ye may wightly prove your puissance upon this craking lozel; but as for me, so may the holy saints defend me! I have no joyance in such bickerments."

"As I hope for the honour of knighthood," replied Fabian, "I heed not the churl, and would fight him with all my heart to serve you; but the deed stands not in possibility. Our comrades expect to see you armed in their presence; and I, who have not yet arrived at the degree of an esquire, am forbidden, by the laws of chivalry, to close the beever of my bassinet."

Cecil now returned, and his comrades began to be clamorous for Gregory to come forth and be armed; when the poor jester, perceiving that nothing but his compliance would appease them, went into the hall, and requested of Fabian to search for the strongest gambason; and the page brought him

one of double fustian, stopped with silk, and quilted with threads of gold.

"This gambason," said Fabian, "whilom belonged to Gilbert Lord Boteler, one of the prowest knights that accompanied Richard Cœur de Lion to the Holy Land; and its skirts, as ye see, are stained with the blood of a Saracen giant, slain by him in single combat."

With this gambason was the jester invested. Over it was placed an haubergeon of double mail, with a chaperon of mail. The avauntails being fastened on either side of his neck, a bassinet of steel, without a vizor, was put upon his head, and laced beneath the chin. The breeches of mail were drawn over his legs and thighs; but he complained they were too weighty, for which reason his thighs were protected by cuishes, and his legs by graves of plate armour; a round shield, embossed with brass, was fitted to his left arm, and a sword of excellent temper suspended

from his girdle. In this equipment, Gervise maliciously observed, that he resembled a grey howlet in a bosket of ivy.

A wooden pell was then set up in the outer court the height of a man, and the distances marked upon it for the legs, the thighs, the body, neck, and head. Gregory was made to strike at this post with his sword, as if it had been his enemy; sometimes aiming his blows at the head, then at the body, and again at the neck, or the thighs, or the legs; his comrades calling out continually to encourage him, or to advise him where to strike.

" While he was thus performing the exercise of a bachelor at arms, a horn was blown at the gate; which being opened, a messenger entered, and summoned the jester to the place of combat, where the challenger was waiting for him. This information made Gregory tremble; and, relinquishing his employment, he enquired if the tasker was

equipped in armour. Being answered in the negative, he assumed something like an air of courage, and haughtily demanded what arms he had taken upon him to use?

"A small hand-shield," said the messenger, "and a huge flail."

At this answer, Gregory's comrades laughed aloud; which somewhat angered the messenger, and he replied: "Pardy, I aread you to foresay your merriment; this choice of arms is not unwillingly made, for these be weapons Ralph can handle skilfully. By the holy rood, he whisks his flail about with such craft, that the prowest of you all may not approach him without endangerment of his bones.—It little boots your champion, lozel-like, to be chopping at that stick: I warrant, if he comes within ten yards of the tasker, he will dear aby his daring; for Ralph will bring him down, with a single blow, as he broke the gate-post even now upon the green."

"Go then," cried Gregory, "and tell the savage, I will not come; he shall be bound over to the peace by his lordship's bailie."

"'Twere better so," replied the messenger, smiling; "so be you are not resolved to visit purgatory before the moon be up."

"Not go!" exclaimed his comrades with one voice, "By the blood of St Thomas of Kent, you shall not eat, nor drink, nor sit with us, for aye, if you cry craven at this stound;" and so saying, they seized him; some fastening upon one arm, and some upon the other, and drew him forward notwithstanding he resisted with all his might, and roared as though they had been dragging him to the slaughter.

"Stint your clamour, you heartless hilding!" said Gervise; "for, will ye or nill ye, by the dragon of St George, you shall go!" With that he ran into the hall, and returning with a demy-lance, began goading the hinder parts of the jester's legs, between the

ligatures of the greaves, and made him wince and frisk with more alacrity than the prancings of his favourite hobby-horse required; when finding all resistance was in vain, and that no possibility of escaping remained, he begged to be released from his uneasy situation, and promised to go with them without any farther compulsion.

When they came to the green, (the place appointed for the combat,) they found Ralph leaning upon his flail, and waiting the approach of his antagonist. He was very whimsically harnessed for the fight. His body was covered with a thick quilted purpoint stuffed with tow, having no sleeves, but the bases were long, and reached to the middle of his thighs; over this he wore a tunic of canvas: His head was covered with a strong cap of leather, fastened beneath the chin; and, upon the top, by way of crest, was set upright a peacock's feather. He had no other defensive armour, excepting a small round

shield, embellished with knobs of brass; his offensive weapon, as we have heard before, was a trusty ashen flail, but he had also a reaping-hook stuck in his girdle, in the place of a dagger.

The moment he saw Gregory, he swung the flail around his head with a flourish of defiance, and he appeared to the jester like a terrible giant, wielding a huge mace of iron; when, giving up all for lost, he stopped short, and crossed himself. He was proceeding also to repeat a paternoster, but Gervise, with a prick of the lance, disturbed his devotion, and obliged him to go forwards.

When the jester entered the circle, the partizans of the tasker, with one voice, objected to the body-armour worn by him. On the other hand, Thomas asserted, that as Gregory was the party challenged, he had, by the established laws of chivalry, the privilege of chusing his arms, offensive or defensive; "and so it is expressly declared, in the

great book of *knighthood and battle* in his lordship's library, where he of you who can, may read it; and Ralph," said he, "if so he list, may be yclad in like guise. But if he demean his own prowess paregal to plate or mail, and chuses to fight in his shirt and breech only, who shall say him nay? he does it at his own peril."

Another objection was then started by Hugh the carrier, who happened to be present, and asserted, that it was not lawful for any man, beneath the rank of an esquire, to wear mail armour, or helm himself with a bassinet; and declared, that he had received this information from a pursuivant at arms at London, when the last great justing was held in that city. Thomas, in reply, contended, that the hauberk, a coat of mail, with sleeves of the same, and helmets with vizors, were the only pieces of armour prohibited by the laws of chivalry, because they belonged to the knights; but the haubergeon, a sleeve-

less coat of mail, and the bassinet without a vizor, might be used by the esquires, and pages, or by any one who could procure them; and referred, for his authority, to the great book before-mentioned.

Several other difficulties would have been started, had not Ralph himself interfered; who, being tired of this useless contest, declared, he was ready to abide the combat equipped as he was, without fearing the butterfly, or heeding the advantage of his armour. This mark of his courage excited applause from both parties; and they proceeded instantly to measure out the ground, and set up props for the boundaries. The combatants were then adjured to speak the truth, and declare, whether or not they came fairly into the field, without charm, spell, or amulet, or the assistance of witchcraft, or any other diabolical practice for the obtainment of the victory? These ceremonies being con-

cluded, the lists were cleared, and the champions were left to their own achievement.

Gregory's friends persuaded him to brandish his sword, and put himself into a proper posture of defence, in order to intimidate his antagonist, which he did with much appearance of fury, so that Ralph was startled for a moment; but the clamour of his comrades, who encouraged him to advance with intrepidity, and secure the first blow, soon recalled his courage, when whirling his flail above his head, he made it whistle in the air, and set forward towards the jester, who fell back in proportion as Ralph approached him, till he came to the extremity of the lists, when, dropping the point of his sword to the ground, he called upon his antagonist to stop, and hear him speak a few words.

"Let thy prating be brief then, my gaudy coxcomb," quoth Ralph, "for I be not in the humour for talking."

"Moderate thy fury albeit for a moment,"

said the jester, faultering; "There is time enow, I wean, for us to slayen one another, if malice require such a sanguinary achievement; but, in the name of Him who suffered dole for us, why should we lust for each others blood, or put ourselves to mortal peril, to afford desport for these guileful lozels, who are assembled to make merriment at our scath. Certes, man, I will take oath upon the vangils, I owe you no maltalent; and, if I should paravaunt be your death's-man, (as what shall let me, if you be wilful,) I shall be a wode man for aye, and lost in dreriment."

"Pardie, you be reckoning without the host," quoth the tasker, surlily; "if you demeen this fine preachment shall pay the score, or hold me for so sorry a clown that I cannot discern between cockle and clean corn; for, in sooth, if I misween not, my flail and your knaveship's sconce shall be better acquainted anon."

"You are so chaffed with anger, friend Ralph, by the guileful workings of these false traitors," answered Gregory, "that you will not sickerly cast the reckoning. By the holy mass-rood, I am right grieffull for the mal-treatment you have underpassed, and am pressed to be friends with you withouten bickerment; and so may our Blessed Lady help me, as I will foresay any wrong that I have done!"

"Hark'e me," cried Ralph, interrupting him; "thou art a prattling coxcomb, an insolent cowardly gull! but I have not forgotten thy lewd prancings and thy vapouring bragments, when the knavish barber had bound my hands. I then promised, what I now ween well to appay; that is, a sound threshing:"—so saying, he elevated his flail, and Gregory's comrades perceiving that he was retreating beyond the boundaries, called upon him to advance, and Ralph drew back a few yards to give him a fair opportunity of

so doing; which the jester not readily embracing, his tormentor, the page, came behind him, and goading him sharply on the calf of one of his legs, obliged him to spring forward on a sudden, which Ralph taking as a signal for engagement, gave him a blow on the side of the bassinet, which made him stagger; and, as imminent danger often makes cowards courageous, so Gregory, having no hope of escaping death but by exerting himself, rushed towards his foe, who was preparing to strike him a second time, and aiming his blow with great fury at the tasker's head, had probably put an end to the contest in a tragical manner, but Ralph couring down avoided the full force; part, however, of his skull-cap was cut away, and the peacock's feather along with it. Ralph, recovering himself, struck again at the jester, but he leaping aside, the flail glanced only upon his hip, without much hurting him; on the other hand, Gregory seeing his enemy

had overreached himself, took the advantage to assail him again. Ralph attempted to parry the stroke of the sword with his hand-shield; but, not holding it firmly, it twisted from his grasp, and he was slightly wounded in the arm. The sight of his own blood redoubled his fury; he threw away the shield with a haughty air, and grasping the flail with both his hands, struck the jester with so much vigour upon his right arm, that he dropped his sword to the ground, upon which Ralph set his foot, and the disarmed jester turned about to fly, when his enraged enemy, taking him at default, struck him a second time upon the head, and brought him to the ground; nor had his chastisement ended here, but both parties interfered at once in favour of the unfortunate champion, and rescued him from the vengeance of the enraged conqueror.

The jester's comrades found him stunned by the blow he had received; and, from the

effusion of blood, they judged him to have been dangerously hurt. They hastily unlaced his bassinet, and drawing off the hood of mail, they discovered a large contusion near his left temple, whence the blood flowed copiously, which heightened the ghastly appearance of his pale lank visage, and frightened Ralph, whose good nature had now regained the ascendancy over his resentment. He was heartily sorry he had not listened in time to the peaceful overtures held out by his antagonist, and verily believed he had been unfortunate enough to kill his foe-man; but, after being sluiced with cold water, and having the wound well washed and bound up, the jester recovered his senses, and Ralph danced about the green for joy. Gregory owned that Ralph was the conqueror; and both of them shook hands in a friendly manner, and promised not to remember any thing that had passed with the least animosity.

Gregory, assisted by two of his comrades, retired from the field of combat, to have his wound dressed by the baron's leech; and the fortunate champion caused his leathern helmet to be unlaced, and having disencumbered himself from the gambason, he bound a kerchief over his wounded arm to stop the bleeding, and put on his super-tunic, when his companions having placed a large garland of oak leaves upon his head, hoisted him upon their shoulders, and bore him away in triumph, and the shield of his antagonist reversed was carried before him, agreeable to ancient custom.

In their way to Hob Filcher's, (for thither they were taking him,) the procession passed by Sim Glover's house, and curiosity called Margery, who heard the shouting, to the gate. The first thing that struck her eye was Ralph triumphant, having his brows amply adorned with the token of his victory; and the moment our hero saw his fair mis-

tress, he leaped from his comrades shoulders, and ran to her, where, making first a fair obeysance, he spake as follows:—

"I wot not well, fair mistress Margery, in what way you may entertake the same at my hands, but, certes, I have awarded to his lordship's silken fool a fair guerdon."

From this address the damsel readily understood, that a battle had taken place between Ralph and Gregory. It also plainly appeared, that the former was the conqueror; and though she really was not sorry fortune had declared herself in favour of the tasker, yet she did not altogether approve of the manner in which he announced the victory; and, for that reason, pettishly replied, "If his lordship's fool, and you, Goodman Shallow-wits, are such gulls as to fall together by the ears, or try the stoutness of your pannikells against each other like mad bulls, areed me, I prithee, what concern have I in what may betide you? certes, I see none."

"Have you then no souvenance," said Ralph, "how I was delivered over to the wicked barber, nor how this vapouring jape-cracker was brought to worry me like a bear in my vile durance? By the three kings of Cullaine, methinks you might have remembered that foul foolery."

"Soothly to say," replied Margery, "I am not at this stound unmindful of one matter you have set forth, and, well I wis, it was all your own seeking. I was beguiled; for, certes, I deemed you to be a true man, who loved me well, and not a churlish treachor, hand and gauntlet, with a chriscross-row lurdane, to misprize my gentle portaunce, and overcraw my good nature; but may our Blessed Lady so help me in day of dome, as I wish for occasion to spring that letter-conning woodcock, Mister Thomas, and make him dance a-fit to the measure I would set for him."

"Your smiles, my pretty lass," said Tho-

mas, who overheard her, "may lead me any where; but, certes, these frowns sit very evilly upon your fair countenance. Had I mirror to reflect them, you would be convinced, and forego them for aye. I am right sorry my intendiments failed in the performance; nathless I must say, they were advised for the best."

"And I," retorted Margery, "should hold it best, for your knaveship's heels to kiss the stocks; a fair guerdon, in my awardment, for your selcouth counselling."

"In sooth, my lovely eves-dropper," answered Thomas, smiling, "your doom is somewhat harsh. Sithence, all would have gone aright, had not you played a shrewd trick upon us; for, certes, we wist not you was so near the window."

Here Ralph interfered, saying, "Look you now, what is done cannot be fordone; and I hope, Margery, ye deem me to have been full appayed for my falsing.—Give me your

hand in a friendly way; for, as I hope for Paradise, I have none ill will, nor do I love you a whit the less sickerly for all this bickerment."

"I will cry truce, with all my heart," replied Margery, presenting her fair hand to the tasker, which he received in his, and pressed to his lips again and again.

"Fye, now, you are so foolish, Ralph!" cried the damsel, blushing; and having, by a faint struggle or two, withdrawn her hand, she smiled, and, bidding him good-even, ran into the house, and shut the door.

Ralph was then remounted upon his comrades' shoulders, and the procession arrived in safety at the Crown.

## SECTION IX.

### A TALE AT THE ALE.

At the threshold of Hob Filcher's door, the victorious combatant met his friend Sim Glover, the fair Margery's father, who took him very cordially by the hand, saying, "I wist not that the old grudge 'twixt you and his honour's jester would have been abroad with so much bickerment. I shall not twiten thee for thy hardiment, but am right glad you have made him cry, craven. Algates, had I been avised o' the matter aforehand, I would ha' assayed to put a spoke in the wheel."

"The affray is all over," said Ralph; "and I thank you for your good weeten. Yet, be-

cause I owed the knave a broken coxcomb, I should have been ill at ease to have let him wend away without his due. But, hark o' me, I have had speech with Margery, and wot ye well, we have shaken hands, and she is my bonnibell again; for, by my hali-dam, I love the wench, algates she be so wilful; and, if dame and you be as willing as I, we will be nearer related before another moon."

"In good time, Ralph," quoth Sim; "dame and I have conned this lesson over before now. You have our liking; win but the girl to say aye, and we will not keep you from the church door."

"By the blood, but it is well said on both sides," cried the host; "Gad's bones, Ralph has demeaned himself like a tall man, and a true. He shewed his dareindo without grudging, and bears no malice after; but, by the bones, I am main glad your bickerings are at an end. You be all my customers, and peace and lustyhood brings most grists

to my mill. Come, come, walk in, my jolly hearts; here's house-room at your service; tell me what you will call for. If you talk of my ale, a-dad you shall wend far away before you find its equal. It is true March huff-cap, and, like the Philistines foxes, carries fire in its tail."

The company took their seats in Hob's summer-room; and the first stoup of ale had scarcely gone round, when they were joined by an elderly man, who was a stranger to them all. His dress was a long dark coloured frock, resembling that of a friar, and his hood was drawn up over his head. He enquired of the host, if he might be accommodated there with lodging for the night; and, being answered in the affirmative, he addressed himself to the assembly, in these words:—

"I am so, please you my gentle masters, a dissour; and that you may well ween me not to be of the common sort, I shall areed

you before-hand, that I belong to Janino's celebrated company of minstrels, who are now with the king at St Alban's, whither I am going to join them; but being, as you see, somewhat aged, I cannot travel so swiftly as afore times I was wont to do; and fearing to be belated before I can reach Hatfield, and right-well tired also, I am desirous of abiding here this night; and, if you be disposed for joyance, collect among you money enough to pay for my harbouring, and reasonable refreshment, and I will rehearse a fit of mirth, well worthy the meed of three golden angels."

The rustics readily raised a contribution sufficient for the purpose, and Hob Filcher, of his own accord, swore by the mass-bell, he would lodge him like a knight of price, without charging him a single cross, if the story was to his gree.

The old man put the donations he had received into his gipsire, and, requesting Hob

not to forget his promise, related the following tale, singing the songs to appropriate tunes, accompanying his voice to the music of a gittern, which he bore with him.

### THE DISSOUR'S TALE.

"Whilom, as old records tellen us, on a night, at Christmas tide, when the north-east wind blew sore, and the snow lay deep upon the ground, two travelling priests were belated on their way to Oxford city.

"At the time it began to be dark, they came to the gate of a small priory, where they knocked, and begged harbour for God's sake. The porter seeing their gowns wrapped about them, and their hoods ydrawn over their faces, weened them to be minstrels, or jugglers, and right glad were the friars of their coming; for they counted upon seeing some mirthful pastime.

"It so chanced, that the prior and the sub-prior were gone to Oxford, convened thither by the bishop; and the sacarist, with the cellerer and the rest of the brethren, who most of them were lusty bloods, and enemies to penance, had agreed to hold a night of revelling in their absence.

"The sacarist, being a shrewd knave, was elected abbot of Misrule, and, according to ancient customs, became the master and regulator of the sports. This jolly crack-jape, having his head decorated with a gilt mitre, presided at the head of the table, and directed his comrades.

"When the two priests were brought in, they saluted the company with a seemly benediction, and the abbot caused them to be placed, one at his right hand, and one at his left, saying, "Well ye ween, this is the tide in which we celebrate the festival of our Lord's Nativity, and make merry; take your seats, and join with us in the pastime, and ye

shall be right welcome." The cellerer then handed to each of them a cup of spiced wine, for that they were cold, and the abbot continued his harangue:—" Ye are to learn, we are now at a jolly gambol, every one of us, withoutten any lett at all, in his turn, must sing a glee, song, or tellen a tale of merriment. The jape stands with friar Peter, and it will come to us anon." But these lewd friars sang so shrewishly, and with words so foul, that good manners biddeth them not be told, and their tales were idle jests of sinful lechery and naughtiness, so that when it came to the two strangers, they were sore abashed, and weened not what to sing. Dan John, whose turn was first, after casting sometime in his mind the kind of verses he should give, and, not knowing any so unseemly as those he had heard set forth, chose the following carol, as meet for the holy tide:—

Saint Stephen was a couthly child,
In royal Herod's hall;
And served him in cloth and bread,
As should a king befal.

Saint Stephen out of kitchen came,
With boar's head in his hand,
And saw a star, full fair and bright,
O'er Beth'lem city stand.

Adown he cast the boaris head,
And went into the hall,
Where doughty Herod sat in state
Amidst his nobles all.

"King Herod, lo! I thee forsake,
And all thy works, I wiss;
There is a Child in Beth'lem born,
Shall bring us all to bliss."—

"What aileth thee, thou imp, Stephen?
Or what is thee befal?
Say, dost thou lack or meat or drink
In kingly Herod's hall?"—

"Me lacketh neither meat nor drink
In kingly Herod's hall;
But there's a Child in Beth'lem born,
Far better than you all."—

"What aileth Stephen? art thou wode?
Or 'ginnest thou to braid?
Say, dost thou lack or gold, or fee,
Or any costly wede?"—

"Me lacketh neither gold, nor fee,
Nor any costly wede;
But there's a Child in Beth'lem born,
Shall help us at our need.

"Full sooth," quoth Stephen, "do I say,
As in full sooth I wish,
This capon, dead, to rise and crow,
That lieth here in my dish."—

That word it was no sooner said,
That word within the hall,
The capon crow'd, *Our Lord's yborn*,
Among the nobles all.

"Rise, my tormentors!" quoth the king,
And spake full angrily;
"Lead forth the treachor from the town,
And stone him till he die!"—

Then mocked they Stephen as he went,
And stoned him in the way;
And, therefore, is his evyn kept
On Christ's own natal day.

"By my hallo-dam, you are a seely dis-sour," cried the abbot of Misrule, "thou art altogether beside the purpose; for well you might wot this geer is suited to the lenten days, when men do penance, and not for this merry festival; aread you then rightly, we

shall expect another kind of saying from your comrade, and better mated to our jollyment; come, trowle the bowl about, and I will give you a virelay suited to my own gree:

SONG.

" Stop, Hoodsman, stop! nor pass us by,
  Counting for ay thy coral beads;
The lusty bowl invites thine eye,
  And tells thee what thy belly needs.

" Thy glowing cheeks, thy blazing nose,
  With many rich carbuncles gay,
Are shining lights, and well disclose
  The part at table thou canst play.

" Do not we hear the plaintive cry
  Thy belly makes, for fowl, and fish,
For capon, ven'son, pudding, pye,
  And every other dainty dish ?

" Nor less it claims, from custom due,
  Large draughts of ale, and spiced wine;
Stint not, it cries, to me be true;
  Be all these welcome blessings mine!"—

" 'Tis three long hours, by Adam's dole!
  And three long days they seemed at least;
The mass detained me from the bowl,
  And pious orgies of the feast.

"The lazy mass-priest was too long,
In penance sharp he made me pine;
There was no music in his song,
His prayer was naught, it brought no wine.

"If life be short, as book-men say,
It is our duty, well I ween,
While shines the sun, to make our hay,
And dance in summer o'er the green.

"But, when our Prior he will prate
Of shrift, at Lent, and abstinence,
Of early mass, and vespers late,
I hold his sermons void of sense.

"For why should we ourselves torment
In vain? and, with a fretful mind,
Eschew the blessings for us sent,
And be to present pleasures blind.

"Then, night and day, to belly true,
In revelry be blithe and brave;
Nor flinch while one small drop is due:
For sleeping,—leave it to the grave.

"The song being ended, the abbot addressed himself to the other priest, saying, "Whatever, mister wight, you be, if minstrel, juggler, or contour, it is time your mail should be unbuckled. The merriment stands at your door, and you were best not to lett

the fair game."—"In good sooth," quoth the priest, "I had lever you would pass me by; for you may wot that I am no brawler, no japer; and, if I misread not, we are well avised by the Postle Paul not to wanton away our time in idle leesings, and wayward fables, which have nought of sooth. But, if ye list, I will read to you a fit or two from my portass; or make, to the best of my conning, a profitable discourse against the heavy sin of goulardism, or glotony, and the unfit usance of strong drink; for look what the same apostle, writing to the Philippians, saith concerning those seely folk, who wilfully forsaking the true God, like filthy swine, make a god of their bellies."—"Stint thy preachment, and 'twere best," cried the abbot, "by the mass-bell, your clapper is too loud. We be not seeking for tales of dreariment; sickerly I vise you, leave your pistles for the housling tide, and shew us a cast of your conning, so be it a slight of legerde-

main, the dancing of a mawmet, or a trick of tumbling."—"I told you before," replied the stranger, "that I have no skill in these knackeries. I am, God wot, a poor priest, who with my brother here were benighted in our travel, and sought, for God's sake, harbour till the morning." "By the blood of St. Benedict, our hallowed patron," exclaimed the cellerer, "we have given the wassell to vermins of a secular cast, I trow! and, so help me Holy Mary, I weened they were minstrels, or jugglers, or they had found no welcome here. But, sithence they cannot pay their meed with merry glee, we will send them forth a-field, and keep no spies among us." This ruthless conclusion was eftsoons put into execution, albe the season was right misfitting for travelling. It showered apace, and the poor priests were unwitting of their way. They begged, in the name of Him who suffered to redeem them from dole, and in the name of St. Benedict, and every other holy

saint and martyr they could call to mind, to have the houseing till day-break; but nothing might they be heard; for the lozel friars took their staves, and beat them from the door, so that they were aghast, and dempt to have been slain did they not wend away; which they did in piteous plight, with hearts full of dreariement.—Here ends the First Fit.

"And now, my good masters, ye wot well it is the manner of us tale-tellers, to put the hood about for a trifle of coin more before the Second Fit be rehearsed; but if you will glad my heart with a cup of spiced wine, for my throat is dry with talking, I will set forth the other part without expectance of any further guerdon."

His request was readily complied with; and, having drank a hearty draught, he continued the tale in these words:—

"The priests had not gone more than two or three bow-shots from the priory, when they espied a bevy of damosels, yclad in

mummery habits, and some of them were wimpled and veiled like nuns. Each of them carried a lighted torch, and they tripped nimbly along in a dancing guise, carolling as they went with merry glee, and little recking of the snow that fell, because, I wis, their journey was not long. Having reached the priory, they beat upon the gate, and were eftsoons admitted.

"Alas!" said Don John, "these lecher friars, I ken, must have their lemans to solace with them in the absence of the superiors, and we were thrust from the doors to make room for loose trundles. God and St Mary help us! or the cold will do us to die miserably upon this bleak heath; for I wot not, (and, I trow, thou knowest no better,) which way we bin to go for more speedy harbouring." "I tell thee what, brother John," said his companion, "certes, we be in main evil plight, but complaining will make none amends. Set the best foot forward, man; I

ween here be some footsteps: If my eyes deceive me not, I ken over yonder coppice the twinkling of a candle."—"St Thomas send us well thither,' answered John; "and may the foul fiend abash these lewd monks, and shorten their unseemly disport!" "Let be," quoth his companion; "for, if they are clearly yshriven at Shrovetide, they shall have a heavy Lent for their Christmas glee."

"This said, they held on their way uneathly towards the light; when, of a sudden, it was divided into many lights, disappearing in one part, and appearing again in another after a strange guise; so that they deemed the foul fiend had beset them with wandering fires, yclept Jack-o'-Lanthorns, to mislead them into some swamp or pool to their destruction; and, therefore, both of them conned over their night-spell, to which they added a paternoster, with other good prayers, and eftsoons the lights were gone.

"Some time afterwards they reached the

borders of a large wood, where there were several roads; and while they were hesitating which they should chuse, the lights appeared again among the bushes, but much nearer, and discovered a large train of horsemen, with their servants bearing lighted torches; and, upon their approach, our travellers perceived them to be ecclesiastics, which made them right glad; and humbly addressing themselves to him who appeared to be the highest in authority, besought him dearnly to acquaint them where they might find housing till the morning. "We are," said they, "God wot, two priests, who have far travelled, and, as you see, benighted in this stound, and sore amated by the cold wind and the snow."—"Gramercy!" returned the horseman, "but certes ye be in no couthly plight, and have unwittingly overshot the only place for harbour near at hand: aread me, my friends, how haps it you passed the priory to the right? for well I wean ye have travel-

led that road. It is the duty of thilk brotherhood to receive strangers, for godsake, and to fare them well."—"Certes then," said Dan John, "they have full foully dealt by us:" and with that he related to the horseman what had passed there; the manner in which they had been thrust from the doors; and the arrival of the jolly wassellers, who had been admitted afterwards. "By holy Saint Benedict, our blessed patron!" returned the prior, for it was him they were speaking to, "if ye tell me no leesings, I will make them dear aby this misrule.—Ye shall go back with me, and my authority, I wean, will make sicker your welcome:" so saying, he caused two of the grooms to dismount, and having set the priests upon their horses, they rode together towards the priory. When the prior, having a crafty thought in his head, to be himself, unseen, a witness to the jolliment, and to work the more shame upon the lusty revellers, caused his followers to

abide at that stound, in a dell, at a short distance from the priory, and he, with the two priests, went forward on foot. He had with him a key of a private door belonging to his own apartment, and afforded communication with a gallery, in which was a window that commanded a full view of the hall, and the company therein assembled. Here he came, with his two companions, and was presently assured, from his own kenning, that they had not belied the brethren. The supper was just serving up, and the prior desiring the priests to remain there, and carefully note where every thing should be deposited, so as to bear the same in memory, withdrew, and returned to his company, who all came forward with him; and knocking aloud at the gate, every thing in the hall was suddenly thrown into the utmost confusion, the alarm being given, that the prior and sub-governors were returned: the boards were cleared in an instant, the cloths removed, and the lemans,

who visited the pious fraternity, were incontinently thrust into a hiding-place; and such of the friars, whose duty called them not to wait upon their superiors, slunk into their cells, bestowing many a malediction upon their mishap, in having so fair a game so foully stinted.

“ When the prior entered the hall, he enquired why he found so large a fire in the chimney; and, after some hesitation, the sacrist told him, “ that the night being cold, the brethren had met there to say their vespers.”—“ By my Holy Dame,” said the prior, “ here is a savory smell!—I trust their prayers have been well received: and as the hall is right warm, I hold it good to tarry here, for in sooth I am somewhat surbett with riding: lay a carpet upon the board, with napkins; I would fain have wherewithall to eat.”—“ My Lord,” quoth the cellerer, “ the fire is made in the refectory, and the purveyor will cover the board there in a short space.”—

"Gramercy, for your diligence," answered the prior, "it is right commendable; but now I remember me, I have brought with me from Oxford a conning clerk, who deals in magic, and is a subtle tregetour, he has promised to show me of his craft, and to work many wondrous doings; I am not the churl to have this pastime to myself, but am willing all the brethren should, at this merry tide, be partakers with me."

"He then caused all the friars to be summoned, and when they had entered the hall, to take their places, they were somewhat asterted by the hest of the prior, but when they saw there was no semblaunce of upbrayings in his countenance, they seated themselves more chearily.

The prior then whispered to the sub-prior, who forthwith went privily to the gallery where the priests had been placed; and having furnished them with disguisements, so that they could not readily be known again

by those who had seen them before, they were brought into the hall; Dan John passed for the joculator, and his companion for his servant, who carried a small box under his arm, when the prior spake to Dan John in this wise:—" Certes, I am told you are a skilful tragetour, and well learned in pastimes of magic: if so be, show us of your ability at this merry tide, and you shall not miss your meed."—" So please you, my Lord," replied Dan John, " I am willing to overstep my accustomed practice, and sithence you have been long fasting upon your journey, I hold it right meet to have the tables covered for your refreshment." — " By Saint Thomas," cried the prior, " that were in sooth a good deed done, and marry none the worse if it be estsoons done!"—" Your Lordship," quoth the pretended juggler, " need only command the pages to pight the carpets, and spread the napkins, for I am ready to make an essay of my craft."—The carpets were pight, and the

napkins spread incontinently. The friars at this tide were nought inclined to mirth, but uneathly kept their seats, silently eyeing each other, and casting in their minds what selcouth gambol was to follow this preparation. Dan John called for a chafing-dish filled with live coals, and taking a portion of powder from the box which his companion bore beneath his arm, he cast the same upon the fire, saying, "Wend hither, ye buxom spirits of the night, who confessen the power of this spell; and bring with you capons richly stewed, doe venison ybaked in pies, with wild ducks, cygnets, and other water fowl."—"By the blessed Martyr of Kent ye have said well," quoth the prior; "but so far as I can see, our supper will be an imaginary one."—"Aread you, my Lord," returned the juggler, "the spirits I have called upon are real spirits, and wend to and fro without being kenned by mortal eyes, but cause the closet at your Lordship's right hand to be opened, and you

shall be my witness the goblins have not deceived me." The closet was opened, and the dainties produced. "And now," continued Dan John, "I will add some other dishes well accorded to the season;" so saying, he repeated his spell, and hight his spirits to bring "a brave boar's head well brawned, chines of fat porkers, and turkies roasted;" these were found in the opposite closet at the prior's left hand, and pight upon the table. "The manchet, and fine bread," added the juggler, "will be found in abundance behind the high desk." By this time the tables were fairly covered, when the prior spoke thus: "In truth you are a notable artist, and have right well atchieved a work of wonder: if the whole be not an illusion of the foul fiend, we shall not sleep with empty stomachs; but I wot, Syr, thir lacketh yet one thing, and that is wine."—"In sooth, my Lord, as I told you, mine are airy spirits, and meddle not greatly with that article; beneath the stalls there are

a few pottle pots, but my familiar areads me, that he can find none better than in your Lordship's cellars." The prior laughed heartily at this conclusion; and having given his benediction, ordered the carvers to do their duty; "for I perceive," said he, "this is none illusion, but substantial food, well ycooked, and suited to the holy tide."

"The pious fraternity, whilom so joyous, now sat upon thorns, and sore abashed, foreseeing that this guileful beginning would bring forth a noyous ending; for they dempt well they had been bewrayed, but wot not by what malengine, unless the joculator really dealed with the devil: yet, in order to gloss over the matter as far as they might, they partook of the provision, though with little appetite, and prayed lustily that every morsel might choke the juggler, who, nothing recking of their curses, with his companion, eat and drank chearily; and the prior, with the superior officers, were exceedingly facetious.

After the supper was ended, and the viands taken from the tables, the prior filled a large cup with white Muscadel, and presented the same to Dan John, saying, "Sickerly, my friend, we have to remercy you for a fair entertainment: this is the rarest cast of jugglery I ever beheld. But read me now soothly, I pray you, are these things counterfeited by the craft of magic natural, or by the couthly workings of spirits, or fairy elves, such as old stories tellen dance in the green meads by moon-light?"—"Wot you not, my Lord," said Dan John, "I called my spirits by a charm, which magic natural teacheth, so cometh their obeisance; for, as I told you, they work unseen."—"But may they not take upon them a bodily form, so be it you command them?" quoth the prior.—"Certes they may," said John.—"Sithence you grant it so," answered the prior, "if you have not gone to the extent of your conning, I should like well to see some sprite, or elf, in human form."—

"In good sooth, my Lord," returned the juggler, "you have proposed a deed uneathly to be performed: yet to do you pleasure, I will not stint the essayment of my art, but I aread you all to be aware of harm, and to keep your places. The spirits I shall upraise are right seemly in their forms, but crafty and treacherous in their actions, and apt to entice men to lustful and wanton dalliance, unprofitable to their souls: and further I warn you to eschew them, for they be foul thieves and plunderers, and you must whip them soundly, or eftsoons they will return again, and rob your cellars, your kitchen, and your pantry, for wot ye well they be great gormandizers." —"You say well," said the prior, "and I will order eight or ten of the most sturdy grooms from the stables, to stand accoiled with scourges in their hands, to smite when the time requires." The grooms were forthwith brought into the hall, and placed near to the door, the station assigned to them by the

juggler. The friars, algates they were sore awhaped, could no longer refrain from murmuring: they foresaw to what purpose this arrangement was made; and the sacrist, joined with the cellerer, made bold to address the prior in these words:—" My good Lord, ourselves, and the brethren at large, intreat you to bear in souvenance, that we be forsaid to use such cursed conjurations, or, by craft of necromancy, hold communication with sathan, or his foul angels: we are aghast at the evil workings of this wicked wizard, and beseech you to stint him; sithence the fiends be more puissant than mortal wights, and woe the while, if we attempt to overcraw them, they may raise a tempest of thunder to harrow our holy house, and bren us with the leven brand."—" Be not accoyed, my brethren," returned the prior; " the piety with which you performed the vespers this evening, and the beadings you have made to God, the Holy Virgin, and all Saints, at that stound, shall abet you from

danger of sorcery or enchantment: but well I wot the orgies now to be performed shall purify these walls from pollution, rather than endanger their downfall." Dan John now threw the powder a third time into the fire, and then ordered the grooms to open the closet at the bottom of the hall, and incontinently a bevy of wanton bonnibelles rushed out, shrieking most pitiously, when they were discovered. The grooms, according to the orders they had received, laid on the lash with lustihed, reckless of the cries and jangles of the seely wantons. The ruthful beadsmen, to empeach the chastisement of their dear lemans, rose up eftsoons, and, rushing towards the door, attempted to burst it open; in the scuffle the tables were subversed, and the lights at the lower end of the hall were suddenly queint; the tumult became general, and the friars, muddled together with the wenches, were beat down the one over the other, and whipped in their turns; for, the

sturdy grooms favoured none who came near them. The sacrist, in forcing open the door, struck his forehead against one of the abutments, and was nearly drent with his own blood: the cellerer, hastening to his relief, fell over a form, and bared his shin to the bone. Both of them bawled aloud for relief; but their cries were not distinguished amidst the general steven, shrieking, and scathful uproar.

"The prior withdrew to his apartment at the onset, and took the two priests with him; and when he thought the friars, and their lemans, were sufficiently yspent, he caused the chapel bell to be rung, and sent the sub-prior into the hall, to call away the grooms, and stint the riot. When the tumult was aslaked, the friars were ordered to take their places in the chapel, which they did with much reluctance; and the prior came thither to them, attended by the two priests, in their proper habits: he then upbrayed them, with many bitter reproaches, for their lewd

deportment, and especially for their lack of charity: when, having suspended the sacrist and the cellerer from their offices for a season, he imposed a heavy penance on the brotherhood, and hight them to sing the midnight service, which well ye may wot, my masters, was done with more dreariment than devotion, and every one of them was permitted to depart to his cell.

"The two priests were fairly appayed for their trouble, and slept warm and quiet: in the morning they brake their fast well, and were dismissed by the prior with his benediction, for having exorcised the holy house, and driven thence, with their due guerdon, the lewd spirits which had haunted it in his absence. And so ends my tale."

This simple recital gave great satisfaction to the rustic auditory, and every one made his comment upon its merit.—Hugh the carrier, who was not famous for his conti-

nency, thought it a shrewd evil deed to maltreat the kind young wenches:—and Robin Tosspot blamed the prior for putting an end so hastily to the good drinking: "I would have had," quoth he, "the two priests sit up all night, by a rousing fire, with two pottle pots of wine, at least, for each of them, and then, my hearts, by the Lord of Lincoln, they would have been in a rare guise for travelling in the morning, and nothing fearful of the cold."—Hob Filcher approved of his friend Robin's amendment; "but, by the bones," said he, "the tale is a good one, and the dissour shall have his gree." The ale was pushed merrily about, until it was nearly midnight, when the company parted in good humour with each other, and every one returned quietly to his own home.

## CHAPTER I.

*An Exploit of the Jester, which ends unhappily.*

WHEN Gregory was cured of his wounds, and ventured forth abroad again, he was informed that his antagonist Ralph, and Margery the glover's daughter, were not only reconciled to each other, but that she had consented to be his bride, and the preparations were actually making for their union. He now plainly perceived that Margery had befooled him, and counterfeited a fondness for him merely for the sake of punishing his rival; this reflection made him very angry; and if he had dared, he would have recked his vengeance upon the fortunate tasker; but not

holding such an attempt to be consistent with prudence, he turned his anger into another channel, and determined to direct its fury against the fair damsel herself, whom he thought was less capable of resistance; and having learned that she was about to visit a poor relation, who was dangerously ill, he watched her out in the afternoon, and seeing she went alone, thought it was likely she might return the same. He therefore provided himself with a white sheet, and hid himself in a hollow tree by the path side, in the warren; this being the way she was most likely to return. He wrapped himself in the sheet, and took his stand as soon as the evening shut in. He had been there upwards of an hour, without any one passing, when the moon arose, and he perceived a female coming over the stile, at the bottom of the warren, whom he doubted not was his fickle mistress; and at her approach he stalked with great solemnity from the tree, full in her sight, and mounting

a little eminence, raised himself on his tiptoes, and elevated his hands, in order to appear the taller. He performed his part with so much skill, that the poor female, who took him for a real spectre, screamed out with affright, and fled from him with the greatest precipitation; he, however, soon discovered, that it was not Margery, but dame Evered, Ralph's mother, he had so violently terrified; and as he had no quarrel with her, he did not pursue, but withdrew behind a thicket of holly, and thence returned quietly to his post again, where he awaited, with patience, the arrival of mistress Margery.

Dame Evered, who really believed she had seen a perfect apparition, was terribly frightened, nearly out of her wits, and made the best of her way to Tewin-green, without daring to look behind her, where running into Hob Filcher's, whose house she first came into, she threw herself into a chair, where she sat panting for breath, without being able to

utter a single word; her face was as pale as dust, and her eyes stood as though she had been mad.

There were several of Hob's usual customers drinking in the kitchen at the same time, who were all of them prodigiously surprised at the deportment of the tasker's mother. "By the death of my grandame," said the host, "the good dame is sore aghast! she is either wode or planet-struck."

His guests were solicitous to know what had happened to her; but it was several minutes before she could utter any expressions that were intelligible, and these were short ejaculations to the saints: but after having crossed herself several times, and counted her rosary, she exclaimed—"Save me, sweet Lady virgin! Save me from the foul fiend!"

"By the Lord of Lincoln," said Robin Tosspot, "Hob Filcher has hit the right nail upon the head! the silly old gammer is stark wode:" and to this the whole company agreed.

At last, however, after she had swallowed a cup-full of metheglen, made hot with spices, which Tib the hostess had prepared for her, she came to herself, and assured the assembly that she had seen a ghastly goblin in the warren, all in white, and as tall as Tewin church-steeple, with flaming eyes as big as saucers: that it stood by the side of the crooked oak, crossed her path, and raised its arms as though it had been to seize upon her.

"Benedicite! cried Tib, and kissed the cross of a rosary that hung from the cell of the mantle-piece. Robin Tosspot, and the rest of his companions, made a joke of the old woman's story: and two cross-bowmen, who had just arrived from Hertford, and were drinking a horn or two of ale, were particularly facetious upon the occasion.

The old woman was highly offended that her recital met with so little credence, and especially of the liberty the two military guests had taken upon the occasion, when she thus

addressed herself to them :—"Without doubt ye be tall men, because you wear a soldier's badge, but there is mony a cock of the game that has a white feather in his tail; and let me tell you, if the hobgoblin had met with you in your way, he would have made your teeth chitter; for well ye may wot the fiend cares not for your quilted pourpoints, your iron skull caps, no nor for the long swords you carry in your belts, no nor your belts and your bows to boot.—In sooth you must have other kinds of shields to defend yourselves, than the round penches you carry at your backs."

"Not so fast, gammer," cried one of them, "for you may not; and if the goblin will but wait in the warren for our coming, we will give him his errand."

"By these ten fingers," said his companion, "he had best begone! for if we find him, we will curry his hide; let him take heed, or we will roast him at his own fire."

"O! no doubt you are tongue doughty hill cows," cried the old dame; "it is always the guise of such swaggering companions, to talk like tall men while tippling at an ale-stake, and the fumes of the ale makes valour great when scathe and danger is distant; but, by the holy cross, I know you will be glad to untruss a point, if the foul fiend should stare you in the face."

"Cogs blood but we will try that," cried one of them, throwing down a groat to pay for what they had drank: he took his change, and then wishing the company good night, departed, singing as he went:—

Be he the foul fiend, or a ghost,
  It boots not, let him but appear;
He shall have little fame to boast,
  We'll send him packing, never fear.

Let him dy'e see, the foul fiend be,
  Hobgoblin fierce, or ghost,
It matters not, the lozel sot
  Shall have small cost to boast.

If he appear, we'll make him fear
  The sea so red and wide;
For there I trow, he soon shall go,
  To tan his ugly hide.

"Benedicite!" cried the hostess, "was ever there two such fell swaggerers?"

"Let be, let be," said dame Evered; "if they were to the warren, they will sing another guess song, anon."

Gregory, as before observed, having frightened the tasker's mother, returned to his stand, where he frequently peeped out in expectation of seeing his fair foe appear. He was nearly tired with waiting, and began to think of returning, when he heard the voice of some persons coming from the upper part of the warren; these were no other than the two soldiers from Hob Filcher's. Gregory looked out to observe the party, and saw them coming hastily down the hill; but as they were not the game he wanted, he stood up as closely in the tree as possible, expecting they would pass by without perceiving him

In this, however, he was mistaken, for they came directly to the place, when one of them looking into the tree, hollowed out to his comrade—

"By the soul of St Guy, the old woman lied not; here is the white thing she prated about; but as I am a soldier, I know not the saucer eyes!"

"No," answered the other, "nor is he so tall as the church-steeple. However, I will assay him—Well, well, my old fox, come out 'o thy hole, or I'll ghost thee with my costard; and i'faith it hath made many a ghost of taller knaves than thou."

So saying, he drew his sword, and his companion did the same; and both of them made towards the tree. Gregory, who had always an unconquerable aversion to a naked sword, found his house would soon be too hot to hold him; he plainly perceived his enemies were not easily to be foiled: and therefore judged it most prudent to

quit it, and trust to his heels for his security. Accordingly, he rushed suddenly from the tree, and having cast off the sheet, which encumbered his flight, and had nearly thrown him down at the onset, he ran toward the bottom of the warren with great celerity; and the soldier who was nearest to him followed as speedily as he was able, while his comrade, laughing, swore it was the ghost of a jack-hare; "however," added he, "the silly beast has left his hide behind him, which I shall claim as my fair perquisite;" and so saying, he put the sheet into his pouch. In the mean time, he who pursued Gregory gained ground upon him; which being perceived by the latter, he shifted his path, and, instead of running towards the bridge by the side of the house, turned short into the meadow:—the soldier still following close at his heels, and passing the dove-house, he thought, by taking the road near the fish-pond, to gain the bridge without any difficulty; but the second

soldier seeing the double which Gregory had made to effect his escape, took his station at the bridge, by which means the unfortunate jester was beset at either end of the road, and was reduced to the necessity of surrendering at discretion, or to leap into the river on the one hand, or the pond on the other. He preferred the river, and being near a place he knew was fordable, and because he could not swim, he began with caution to wade through. When the soldier at the bridge saw Gregory take to the water, he crossed over, and running up to the bank, arrived time enough to prevent the jester from effecting his landing: his comrade also came up, at the same time, upon the opposite bank. Having thus completely entrapped the apparition, they called upon him to capitulate; threatening to have recourse to their bows in case of his non-compliance. Never was any poor ghost so terribly frightened before; and being chilled with the cold, his teeth chat-

tered in his head: he therefore lifted up his hands in token of a surrender, and begged to be relieved from his purgatory; which, on the part of the soldiers, was agreed to. He then made towards the bank of the river, on the Tewin side, and, because it was rather too steep, he entreated the soldier to assist him, which he readily promised to do: but no sooner had he got the jester's hand in his grasp, than he plunged him two or three times over head and ears into the water, and at last drew him out panting for breath, and half drowned; and as soon as he recovered himself, this merciless enemy began to belabour him over the back and shoulders with the flat part of his sword, which he used by way of a cudgel, till he roared like a baited bull; and falling upon his knees, besought him to forbear, assuring him that he was no ghost, but a man.

"No ghost!—In the devil's name," cried

the soldier, "what could make you take up the resemblance of a goblin?"

"No-no-nothing," said Gregory, stammering, and frightened out of his wits.

"Nothing, thou varlet!" replied the soldier surlily.

"No-no-nothing, in soo-soo-sooth, but that I was a foo-foo-fool."

"I believe thou art a fool," returned the soldier.

"Yes, I am, I am," said the jester, "that is all."

"No, no," answered the man of war, "thou art a wilful knave as well as a fool, and deserved the maltreatment you have met with: but prithee, goodman-fool, go home, and learn to be wiser to-morrow." So saying, he gave him a kick on the breech, which honest Gregory received very quietly; and returning a low bow, made the best of his way to Tewin-green. When the soldier joined his com-

rade; both of them proceeded towards Welwyn, singing as before:—

Let him d'ye see, hobgoblin be, &c.

Poor Gregory, dripping wet, well beaten, and disappointed of his intended vengeance, was in a deplorable taking. As soon as he had recovered himself from his fright, and was convinced that the danger was over, he cast in his mind what steps it would be most prudent for him to take—dry clothes seemed indispensably necessary; but how to procure them, without exposing himself to ridicule, was the difficulty; and to appear in the trim he was, before his fellow-servants, at Queen-hoo-hall, was not to be thought of. At last he determined to pump up a dismal story of spectres in the warren, to amuse the topers at Hob Filcher's, and dry himself by the fire in his kitchen.

When the soldiers had departed from the kitchen, the company began to animadvert,

at large upon the story related by dame Evered:—some believed it, and sided with her; others again imagined she had taken a horn or two more ale than usual, at Tewin-water great house, where it appeared she had been; and so, said they, being scared at her shadow, has transmewed one of the milk cows into a ghost.

The old lady, on the contrary, asserted, that the goblin which had appeared to her had only two legs, and that his eyes were as large as saucers.

While these arguments were handing about, in rushed Gregory—his garments drenched with water, his hair dishevelled about his ears, his teeth chattering—he ran towards the fire, where he stood trembling, and the first words he uttered were, "the ve-ve-very d-d-devil himself is in the war-war-warren."

"Did not I tell you?" cried the old woman, "but you would not believe me."

The attention of all the company was in-

stantly turned towards the jester:—his wet condition, and frightened appearance, had too much of nature in it to be counterfeit.

The story of the spectre gained credit with the greater part of the company, who began to be alarmed; and "Benedicite" was in the mouth of many, who had not used a word of such sacred import for several moons.

In the mean time, Gregory stood shivering by the fire-side; and begged of Hob, for mercy's sake, to throw on an additional faggot; and having taken a large horn of warm spiced wine, he appeared to be more calm.

Every one was questioning him with respect to what he had seen; to which he replied, "My masters, why I have seen the devil and his dam, I trow, with a host of their imps.—Why I fought with a score, at least, of goblins, at one time; and, by'r Lady, I swinged them soundly with my oaken towel; but woe the while they sprouted up like mushrooms, overpowering me by numbers,

and will ye, or nil ye, they tumbled me down to the river, sowsed me into the water, over head and ears, and then pulling me through bush and briar, and thumping me against the trees, at last they left me astride upon the stile, at the top of the warren, half dead with the fatigue of hard fighting, and in the condition you now see me."

"Saint Bridget protect us from foul spirits!" cried Tib the hostess, crossing herself; "sure master Gregory you was not at mass last Sunday, nor shrift yourself at Shrovetide. —Bless us, 'tis a wonder sathan did not make away with thee at once."

"Away, you silly sot," answered the host; "if the foul fiend would do me justice, he would silence that shrew's clack of thine—go to, you fool, what should the devil have to do with Shrovetide, more than any other tide! out upon you for a widgeon, dost think he plays at bo-peep in a pancake?"

"Well said, Hof," cried Robin Tosspot;

"for my part, I have heard much of the evil fiend sathan, but he always knew better than to meet me. I defy him and his horns, and his claws into the bargain."

"Out upon thee, thou perilous pagan, thou seely sot!" cried dame Evered; "the neighbours wot-well that you are a very Jew at unbelief, and none of us would wonder if the fiend should come after cock-crowing, and fetch thee away in a storm of fire and brimstone, for your waywardness."

Toss-pot was wonderously witty, in his way, upon the old dame; still persisting in it, that her bewildered fancy had led her to mistake the squire's white cow for a spirit.

"Ay, but," said Wat Coulter, "if dame Evered be mistaken, what say you to master Gregory, and his kennel of foul fiends?"

"Who, Gregory?" cried Toss-pot with a hiccup; "why he, I trow, got drunk at mother Rennet's ale-stake, near Digs-well's Mill, and rolled into the river, coming back,

as I did three moons ago, into the May pond. By the mass, I thought I was pursued by a legion of fairy spirits; but being soused in the water, brought me to my senses; and when I paddled out of the water, I saw nobody, but Tom the hedger's old sow, with her litter of nine pigs;"—here the clowns laughed heartily:—" and thus it happened," added Toss-pot, " by me when I was drunk."

" It did," answered Gregory; " for who amongst us can bear in mind, master Swill-bowl, when you were sober?—not these ten winters, I can take upon me to swear. Out upon him, for he is no better than a pagan Turk."

" No more he is, dame Evered," said Tib; " he swears like iniquity in a mortality play."

" Stint your gossipping, you callat," said Hob to his wife; " let us have no more of your caterwalling: odds-heart, let us have no more

clamour and contention. Who calls for a pot of ale, or a pottle of spiced wine?"

"By the mass, my jolly host, but you say well," cried Toss-pot: "a cup of nice sack is the best spirit I ever met; and, as I am a true man," added he, hicking, "it never hurts me."

"And that is a spirit," returned the landlord, "that I am conjurer enough to raise, whenever I have customers to lay it."

"Which, by the bones, I can do at all times," said Robin; "not by sending it into the red sea, but by turning it down the red lane, my brave heart." Here all the clowns burst into a loud laugh; the women held up their hands, and said their night spell; and Gregory, viewing them with an eye of contempt, said they were foul-hearted Jews, and children of Judas.

All this time Pierce the potter, who had not interfered in the preceding discourse, came gravely forward, and, addressing him-

self to the jester, said, "I marvel much, good master Gregory, if you did not meet with two sturdy knaves of crossbow-men."

Gregory was exceedingly disconcerted at this question, (for he was not at all aware that the soldiers had called at Hob Filcher's,) and it was some time before he could determine upon an answer; at last he resolved, at all events, to give it in the negative.

"Why, that is a main strange chance," returned Price; "for it is not past two hours since two swaggering blades of soldiers (with their swords and bucklers, and armed in quilted) called in here, on their way from Hartford to Wellyn, and seeing dame Evered so frighted, they proposed to go through the Warren; and did you not meet them?"

"Meet the soldiers, say you!" returned Gregory, much discomposed; "no, by the holy St Dunstan, not I. No-no-soldiers; odds bods, I should have been glad to have

done that; for if they were men, they would have come to my assistance."

"That is what I mean," said the potter; "for they swore they would swinge the goblin soundly."

"The devil they did!" returned the jester; "but if they had seen what I have seen, and been put to it as much as I have been put to it, by a whole swarm of goblins, they would have stinted, I trow, their big talking. I saw them not, and perhaps the foul fiend has run away with them on account of their swaggering manners, as he and his imps would have done with me, had I not found time to repeat my *paternoster*."

"What!" cried Toss-pot, laughing, "do you really trow, in sooth, that the devil has clapped his claws upon the two sturdy men of war, and carried them quick to purgatory?"

"I know not," answered the jester, surlily; "but I wish he had them, and you too, you

silly sot:—the fiend indeed only lets you alone because he is sure of you, and troubles himself with such as he is in doubt may escape from his griping."

"Marry, well said, and to the purpose," cried Toss-pot; "why, my lord's knave of a jester has played the fool so long by profession, that he is become a natural fool, and dreams of elves, and ghosts, and jack-a-lanterns." This occasioned another general laugh.

Gregory shrugged up his shoulders, and made no reply; for the subject of the soldiers was not at all suited to his satisfaction; and he began to fear, that, through their medium, the whole transaction might be divulged; and he certainly had no desire that the true part he had taken in it should be brought to light. Dame Evered returned home, the jester tarried some time longer to dry himself more thoroughly.

The jolly topers finding it began to grow late, were now about to depart, when their company was increased, and their appetite for ale and revelling renewed, by the return of that same aged minstrel or dissour, who had so well played his part upon the evening of the combat between Gregory and the tasker. The wassel bowl was speedily replenished at the special intimation of Robin Toss-pot, and under his immediate direction.

"For look you," said Robin, "I have a feat above all the smiths in Nineveh. I am a philosopher, that can dispute you of the nature of ale; and mark you, sir, a pot of ale consists of four parts: *imprimis,* the ale; 2dly, the toast; 3dly, the nutmeg; 4thly, the ginger which we clerks call the four elements of the tankard; and, if you quaff him to the tune of a merry tale or song, why, he has no fellow in all the schools."

"And a merry tale shall you have, my masters," quoth the dissour, addressing him-

self to the jolly groupe; "collect me but three groats among you, to pay my lodging and my cheer, and you shall have one worth three golden eagles."

"Marry," said Toss-pot, "let it be such a tale as thou told'st us last, and thy lodging shall be neither better nor worse than in mine own truckle-bed, though I should sit up for it all night with my friend Filcher."

The old man thanked his quondam host for his courtesy; and, putting himself in a proper attitude, partly recited, partly sung, as follows in the next chapter.

END OF VOLUME THIRD.

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